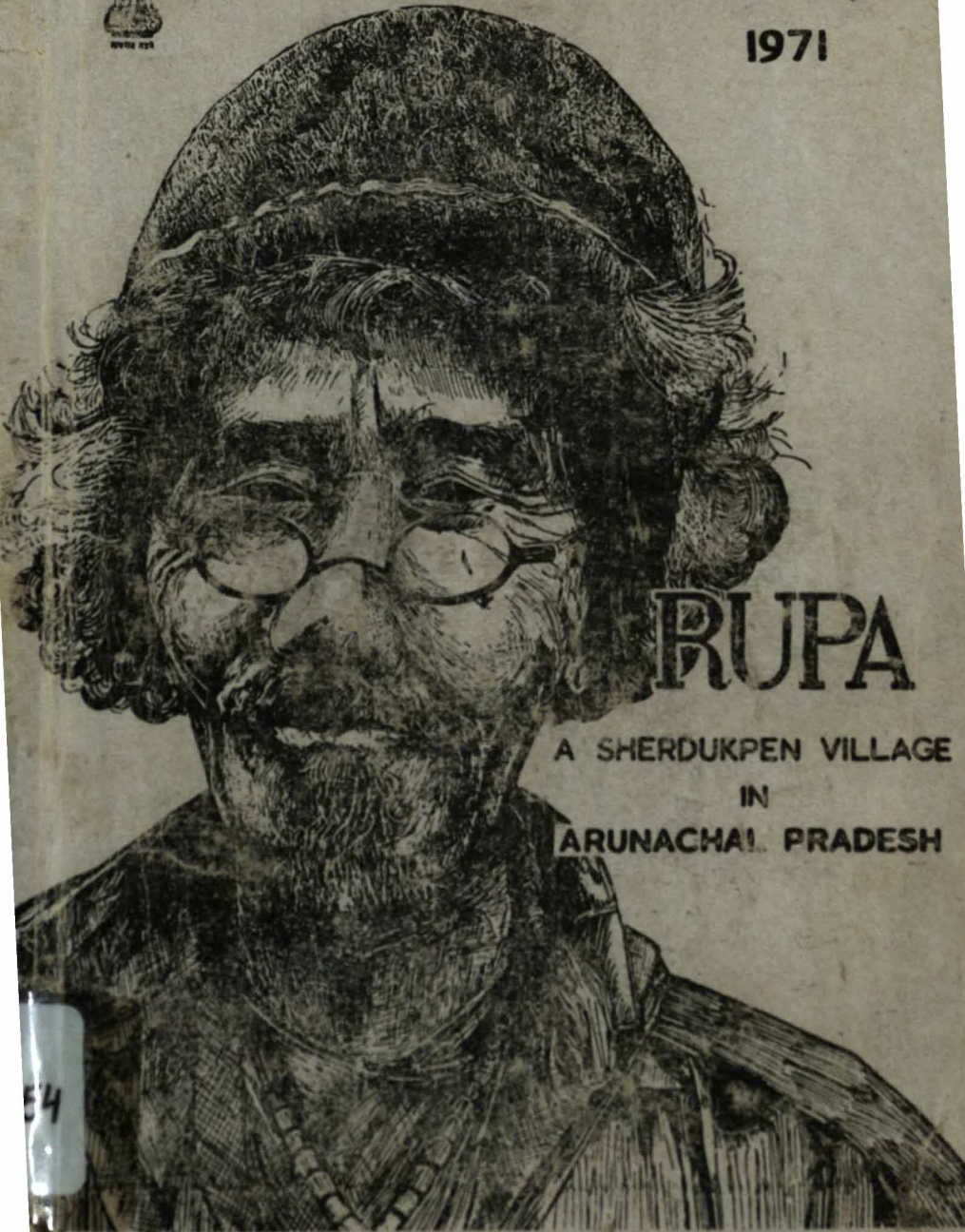




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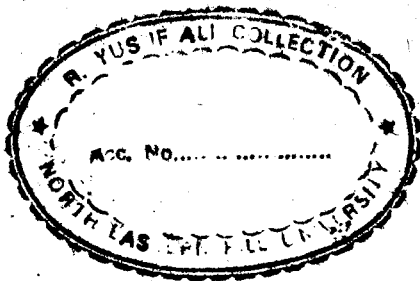
1971



RUPA

**A SHERDUKPEN VILLAGE
IN
ARUNACHAL PRADESH**

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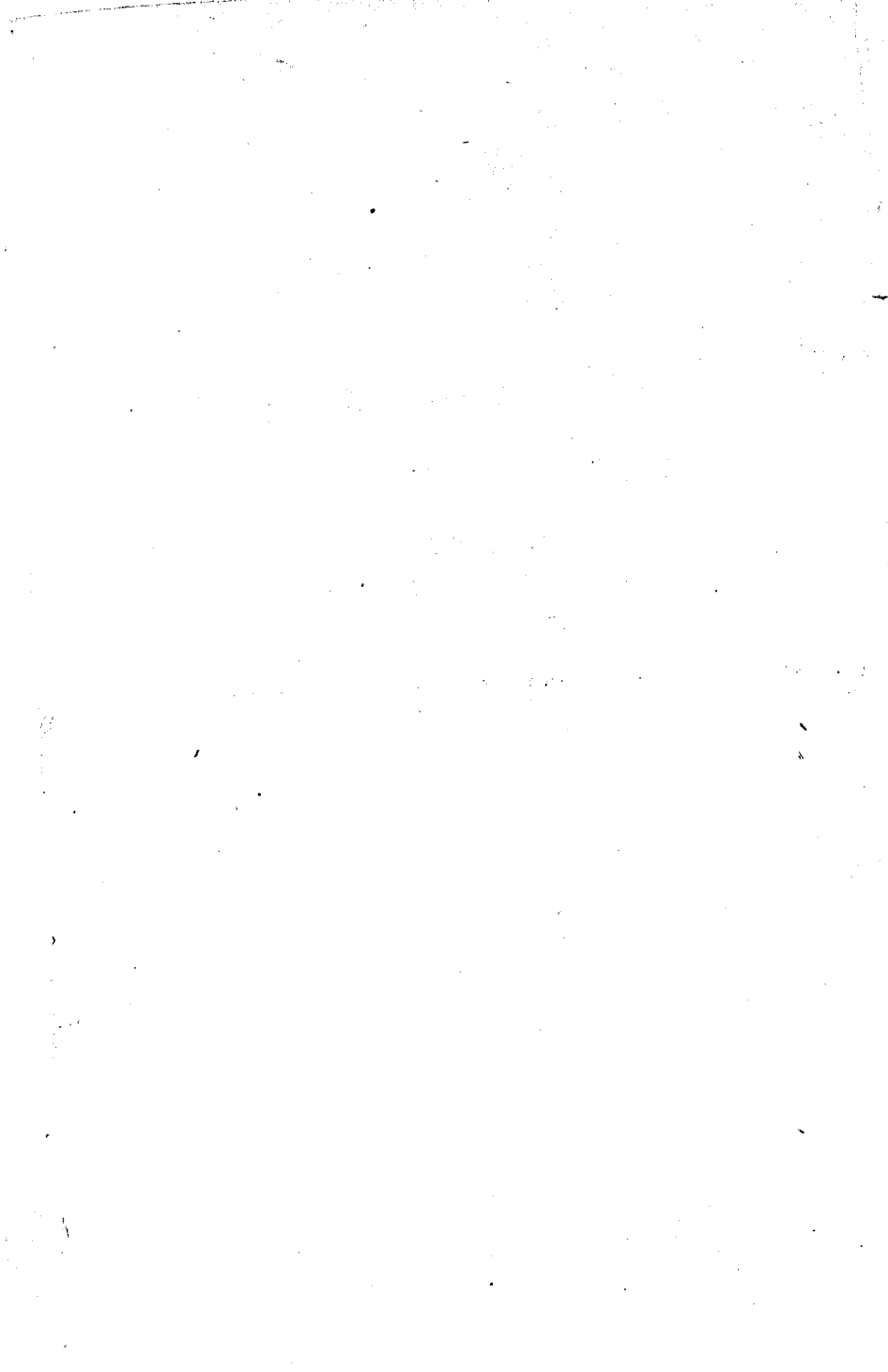
PART VI C

SOCIO-ECONOMIC SURVEY OF RUPA

A Sherdukpen Village in Arunachal Pradesh

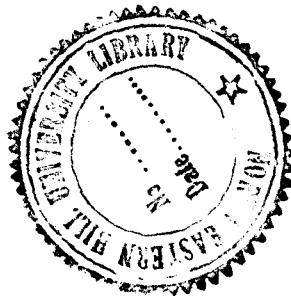
<i>Investigation and draft</i>	:	M. S. ADHIKARI
<i>Supplementary investigation</i>	:	CHANDRA SEN
<i>Consult t</i>	:	(Mrs.) I. K. BARTHAKUR
<i>Research design, guidance and editing</i>	:	Dr. B. K. ROY BURMAN

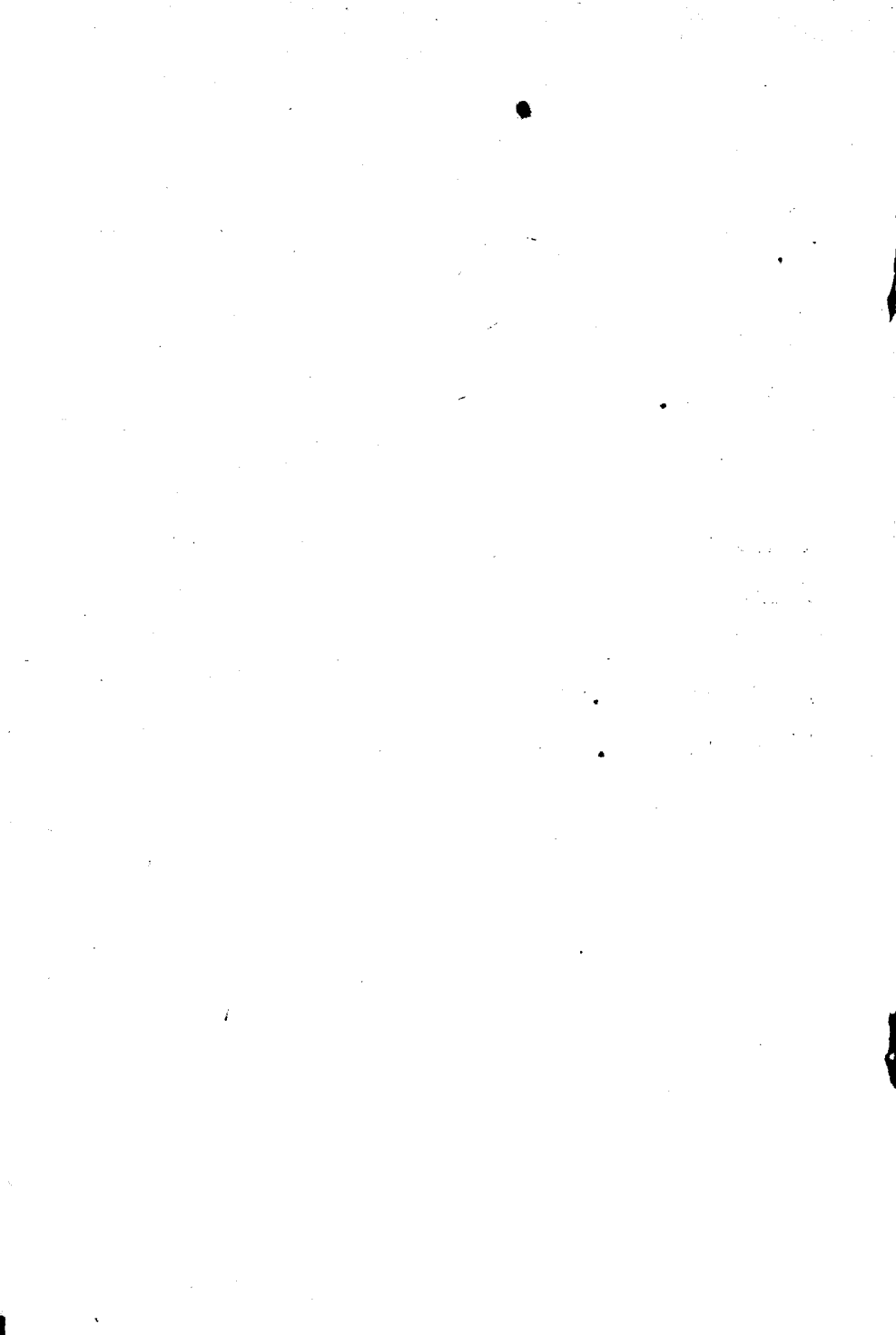
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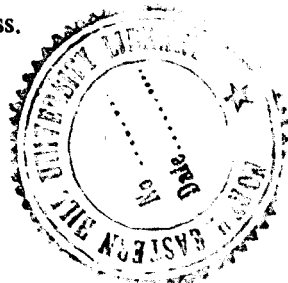
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 (Middle line)
 Ring : Worn by men and women.
 (Bottom line)
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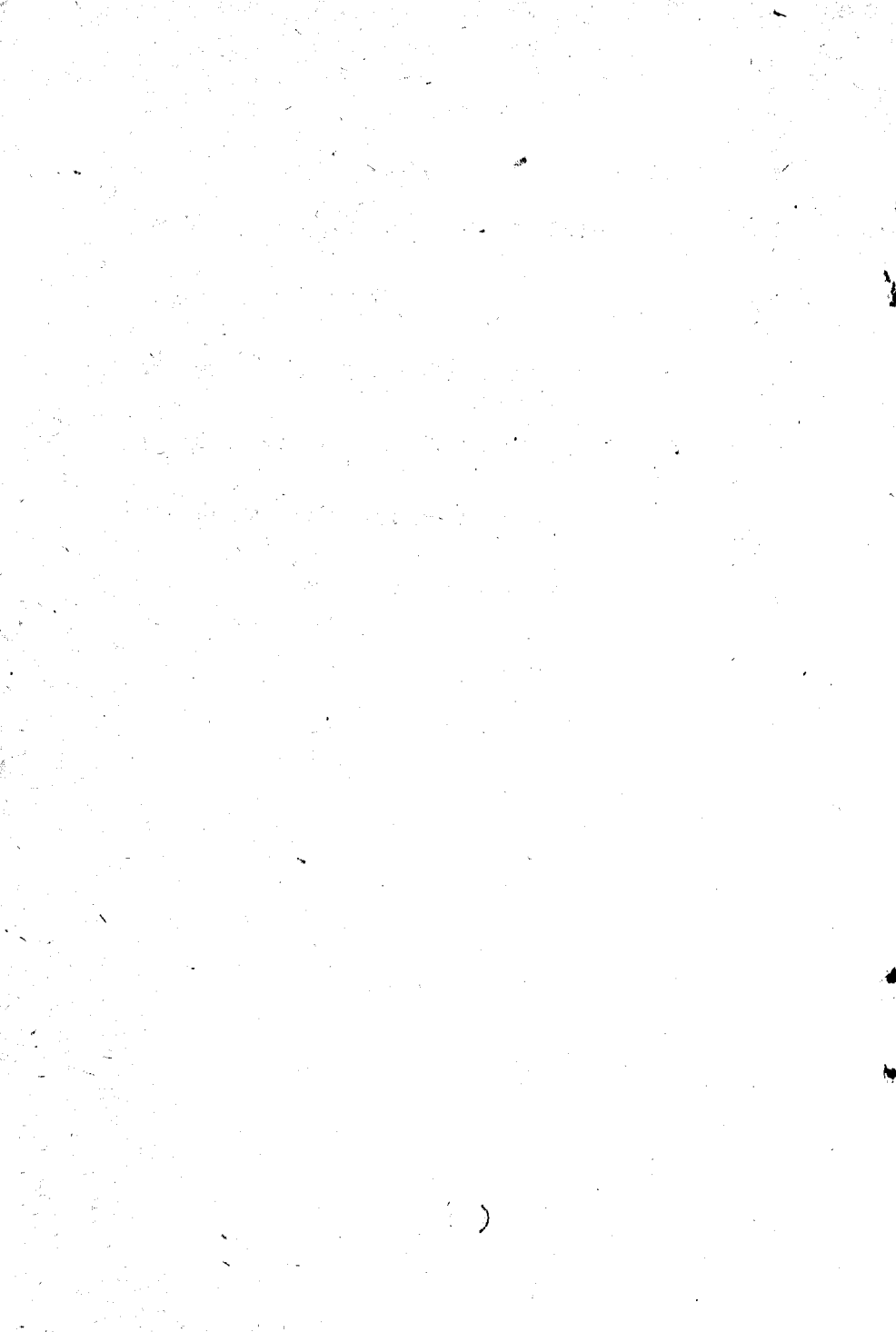
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- Plate 39 Village Gompa, on the left side there is one apartment for cooking food during festivities.
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1. Notional map of Rupa showing rivers, high ridges, bridges, burial grounds, etc.
2. Notional map of Rupa showing distribution of houses according to clans.
3. Diagram showing distribution of workers and non-workers by sex and broad age-group.
4. Diagram showing distribution of livestock and number of households.
5. Diagram showing distribution of population according to age-group.
6. Diagram showing age and marital status.

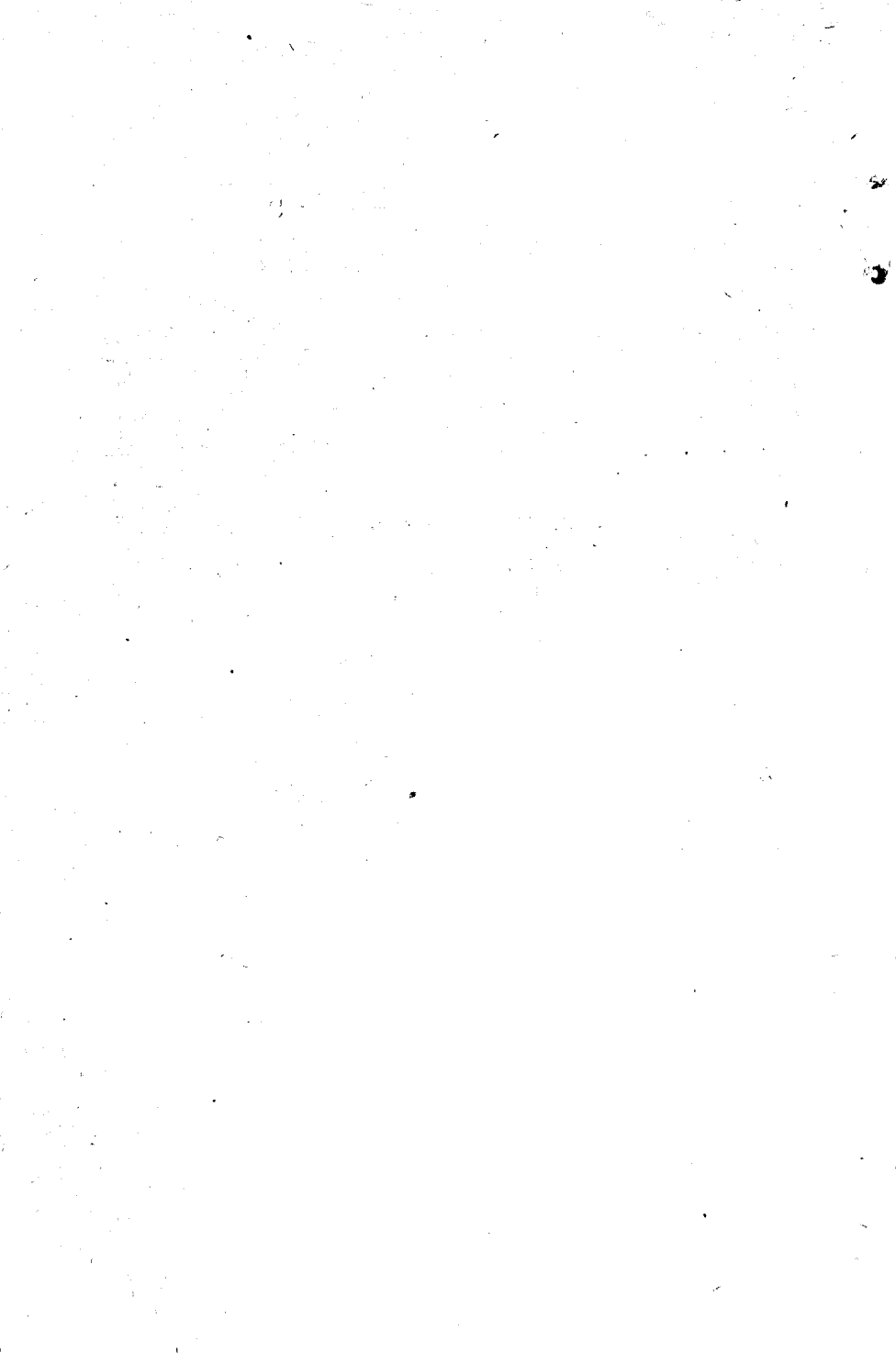


FOREWORD

The Census of India has a long tradition of undertaking and promoting investigations on diverse aspects of the Socio-economic life of the country. During 1961 Census on the initiative of my illustrious predecessor, Shri A. Mitra, a study of more than 500 villages was taken up. The Socio-economic Survey of Rupa, a Sherdukpen Village in Arunachal Pradesh (N. E. F. A.) was undertaken as a part of this project. These studies would provide an integrated picture of community life. S/Shri M. S. Adhikari, Chandra Sen, Shrimati I. K. Barthakur and Dr. B. K. Roy Burman deserve to be complimented for the useful report on Village Rupa in Arunachal Pradesh.

NEW DELHI
December, 1972.

A. CHANDRA SEK HAR
Registrar General, India



P R E F A C E

In 1963, it was decided that Socio-economic Survey of six villages would be undertaken in N. E. F. A. (Arunachal) by the Social Studies Division of the Office of the Registrar General of India, with assistance of the staff provided by the Superintendent of Census Operations, N. E. F. A. Prior to that some preliminary investigations were made in these villages by the staff of the Superintendent of Census Operations, under the supervision of Shrimati I. K. Barthakur, Assistant Superintendent of Census Operations, N. E. F. A., but due to various difficulties no satisfactory progress could be made.

By the time the Social Studies Division of the Office of the Registrar General of India took up these villages for survey, the field staff of the Superintendent of Census Operations who had made the preliminary studies earlier, were transferred under the N. E. F. A. Administration as Divisional Statistical Officers.

The N. E. F. A. Administration, however, were kind enough to allow these officers to collaborate with the Office of the Registrar General, India for conducting the survey.

Schedules for conducting the survey were drawn up by the Social Studies Division of the Office of the Registrar General, India and the Divisional Statistical Officers were given training for three weeks in Delhi about canvassing the schedules.

Rupa in Kameng district of N. E. F. A., is one of the villages taken up for survey. The schedules

(xv)

were canvassed by Shri M. S. Adhikari, Divisional Statistical Officer. I personally visited the village accompanied by Shri Adhikari in 1964. This provided me an opportunity to reformulate the problems as well as the tools for investigation. After that detailed investigations were done by Shri Adhikari and Shri Chandra Sen of the Social Studies Division, Office of the Registrar General, India also paid a short visit to the village and did supplementary studies on specific points indicated by me.

Shri Adhikari prepared a fairly comprehensive draft report. It was revised and edited by me, by inclusion of fresh analytical foci in several directions.

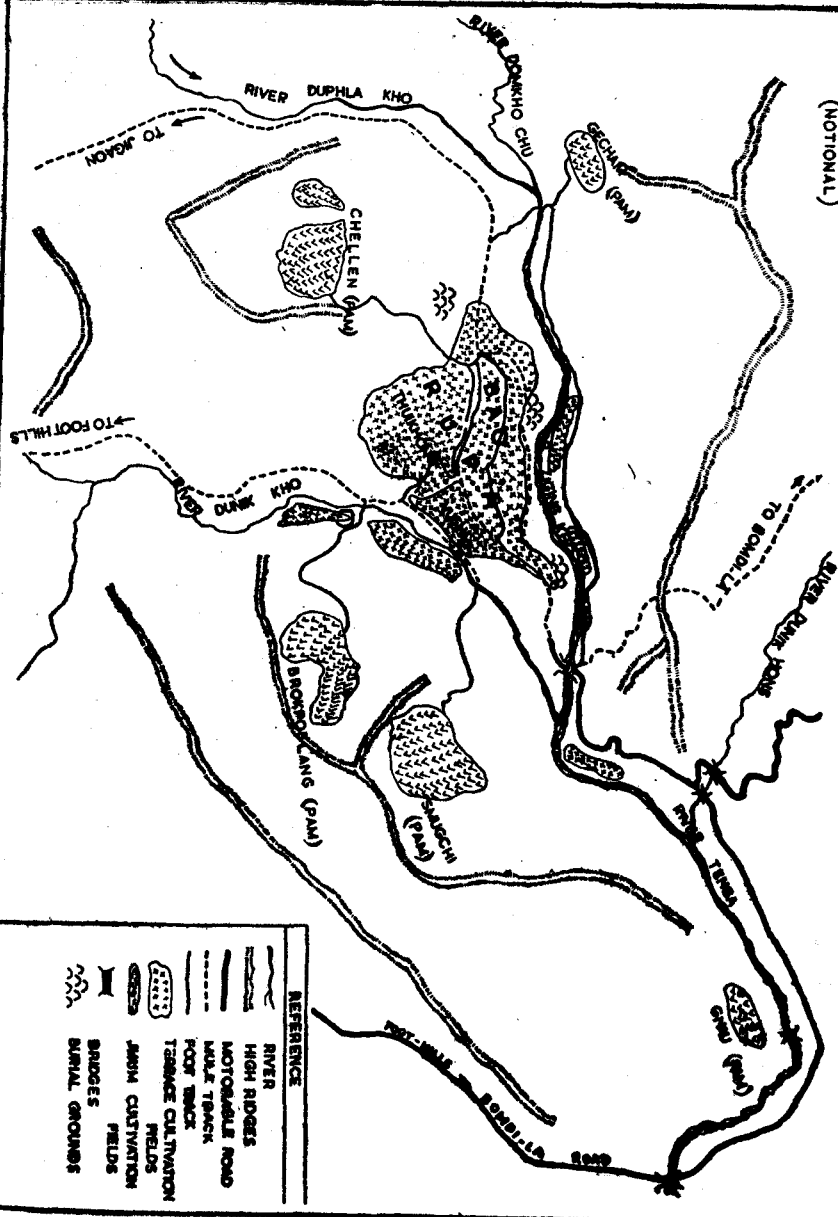
I would like to thank Sarvashri Ahmad Hussain and Kailash Chand Kaul for the photos taken by them, depicting the various aspects in the life of Sherdukpen. Thanks are due to Sarvashri R. P. Naula and N. K. Banerjee for the follow up actions at the printing stage. I am also grateful to the successive Directors of Census Operations, N. E. F. A. for making available the services of Shri Adhikari for the purpose of the present study and also for supplying the supplementary information which were required by me from time to time at the stage of finalising the report.

I would also like to thank the N. E. F. A. Administration for providing me all the facilities during my tours in N. E. F. A.

Lastly, I would like to avail of this opportunity to thank Shri A. Chandra Sekhar, Registrar General, India, for the keen interest that he has taken in the social investigations under the aegis of the Census.

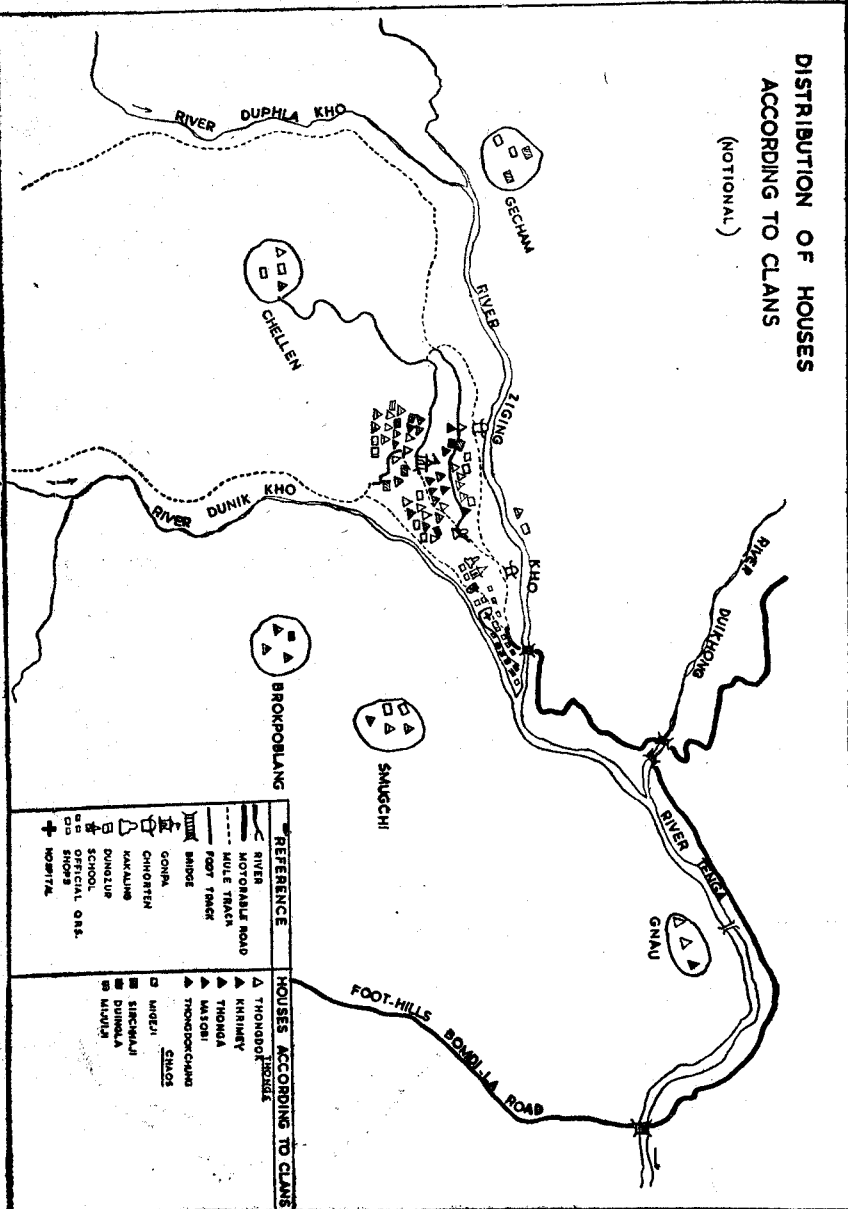
B. K. ROY BURMAN

VILLAGE RUPA
PHYSICAL FEATURES
(NOTIONAL)



REFERENCE	
	RIVER
	HIGH RIDGES
	MOTORABLE ROAD
	MULE TRACK
	FOOT TRACK
	TERRACE CULTIVATION FIELDS
	ARBOR CULTIVATION FIELDS
	BRIDGES
	BURIAL GROUNDS

DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSES ACCORDING TO CLANS (NOTIONAL)



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The village

The village Rupa is situated about 19 kilometers away southwest of Bomdi-La, the Divisional headquarters, Kameng District of N.E.F.A. It is situated at a height of about 4700 feet above the mean sea level. Its location in the geographical map of India is at $92^{\circ}-24'$ longitude and $27^{\circ}-12'$ latitude. Rupa is the nucleus village and has eight different hamlets, as follows:

(1) Thaugreo, (2) Jomiam, (3) Mukhuthing, (4) Chellen, (5) Gecham, (6) Brokpoblang, (7) Smugchi and (8) Gnau. For the purpose of Census and this survey, the hamlets (1) Thoongry (2) Jomiam and (3) Mokothung have been taken as separate villages and Rupa includes the hamlets of (1) Chellen, (2) Gecham, (3) Brokpoblang, (4) Smugchi and (5) Gnau.

The main village is spread in the depression of hills. The village land is undulated. The hamlets are spread on the hillslopes. The village is approachable both from District headquarters, i.e. Bomdi-La and from the nearest railway station of Missamari by a motorable road. Rupa is a fairly typical village of Sherdukpen Tribe. It is the oldest and an important village of the Sherdukpens. The total population of Sherdukpen Tribe consist of 1144 persons living in six main villages. The people are simple, polite and hospitable. Since it is nearer to the District Headquarters, people have received their share of modern developments and this seems to have influenced their attitude towards the outsiders to a considerable extent.

Their close contact with the plains people of Assam particularly with 'Kacharis' (a tribe belonging to the Bodogroup) has influenced their social and economic life.

The main occupation of the people is agriculture and the supplementary occupations are cattle rearing, fishing, weaving and silver smithy.

According to the villagers, in the past their territory included the villages of Jargaon, Simulguri and Udalguri (all in Darrang District of Assam State) in the South, and Rahung and Khitam in the North; Sinchong and Wanghoo, the villages of the Khowa Tribe in the East and North-East and that they used to collect taxes from Kacharis and Khowas inhabiting their territory. However, after the area has been brought under the effective control of the administration, the Sherdukpens are not allowed to collect taxes from 'Kacharis' and the 'Khowas'.

The present boundaries of the village extend in the north upto Dikhungpani, in the South upto a place called Jabrang (about 13 kilometers from Rupa towards South), in the East upto Sinchong and Wanghoo, and in the West upto Jigaon and Shergaon. These villages are also inhabited by the people of Sherdukpen Tribe.

Rupa falls under Kalaktang Administrative Circle, the Headquarters of which is located at 'Kalaktang' about 75 kilometers from Rupa, connected by a porter track. The nearest market, Post and Telegraph Office, Craft Centre and High School are located at Bomdi-La at a distance of 19 kilometers from Rupa. These two places are connected by a motorable road. The nearest Veterinary Dispensary is at Salari, about 32 kilometers from the village. There is a Dak Bungalow in the village made by the N.E.F.A. Administration. This Dak Bungalow was constructed in 1953. It is made of wooden frame but the walls are plastered with mud and the floor is cemented.

The villagers annually visit Doimara, Udalguri and Rangapara in Darrang District of Assam, the main places of their trade. Doimara is situated at the Foot-hills of Kameng District, about 84 kilometers by road or 4 days journey by the mule path, on the side of 'Bomdi-La Foot-hills' road. This is the Winter Camp of all Sherdukpens (including the people of Shergaon and Jigaon) where they stay for 4 months (December to March) every year. Udalguri and Rangapara, about 100 and 57 kilometers respectively from Doimara, are well connected by roads. The villagers can reach Udalguri in two days and Rangapara within one day from Doimara.

Physical aspects

After crossing a hillock named *Phongkung*, one reaches the site of an old village, from where a beautiful view of the Rupa village and the steep hills covered with pine and other coniferous

forests can be seen. The altitudes of the hills surrounding Rupa varies from 7000 to 9000 feet above the mean sea level. The North-Eastern hills from Rupa are known as Phongkung, which are rocky, having thin vegetation while the other hills have thick vegetation. The high hills punctuated with deep valleys make a picturesque landscape which is everlasting in the mind of the beholders.

The houses in the village are environed by terraced cultivation fields which are dotted with rock projections. The land inside the main village, is rocky with a top layer of sand.

The crystal clear water of river Ziging Kho and its tributary 'Dunik Kho' traverses through the village area and the flow is from West to East. The water of these rivers meet one mile beyond the village and is known as Tenga-river, which ultimately flows into the basin of river Kameng or Bhorelli. Due to their deep courses, these rivers are not of any use for irrigational purposes but they are the only sources of drinking water and fish. Incidentally, it is to be noted that fish is abundant in these rivers.

Climate

In general the climate of the village is healthy. Since the village is surrounded by the lofty mountain ranges which act as barrier to the progress of the monsoon clouds. The annual average rainfall is only about 35 inches.

In a year there are three distinct seasons, i.e. Winter, Summer and Monsoon. Winter (October to February) is very cold, but no snow fall occurs, only during the peak winter months frost occurs heavily. Winter is followed by a mild summer. During the summer (March to June) it is hot, but the temperature does not exceed 95°F. The monsoon or rainy season starts from the month of July and continues till September. This is the busiest season for the villagers, because they have to do hard work in their fields to produce the crops for the whole year.

Flora

The general aspect of the forest in this area shows that they are of mixed monsoon type. Around the village, the forests are deciduous and rather prominently dry, while around Jabrang and Bomdi-La the forest are ever green, having thick under-growth or ground cover. Many of the tall towering trees towards Jabrang are covered with mosses and lichens. In the village area forests are more or less exposed and strikingly poor in under-growth. The

common vegetation in this area are Pine, Oak, Deodar, Walnut, Rhododendrons, Citrus, Raspberry and Orchids of different varieties. Tree-ferns are also found in this area.

Pine (*pinus excelsa*) is a gregarious tree practically throughout, towering in slopes and ravines. These forests are composed of trees having varying heights; some are lofty and attain 100 to 150 feet in height. Among such trees are to be mentioned *Pinus longifolius*, *Pinus excelsa* wall, *Michelia excelsa* Blume and *Brunonia* Car.

There are varieties of Rhododendrons found in this area. The red and purplish flowered species are pretty and ornamental. Most of the Rhododendron flowers blossom in the months of March-April. Rhododendrons *niveum* Hook (KHANDUKHING) and Rhododendrons *griffithianum* weight (TAMO-HING) are widely distributed species in the surroundings of the village. The height of these species varies from 30 to 50 feet.

A large number of trees of known economic value flourish in these forests. The following trees are of much importance which are used for timber making and wood carving purposes:—

<i>Botanical Name</i>	<i>Local Name</i>	<i>English Name</i>
1. <i>Pinus Excelsa</i> Wall .	Bachi-Hing	Pine
2. <i>Michelia Excelsa</i> Blume	Chansing-Hing	
3. <i>Daphniphyllum Hima-</i> <i>layanense</i> Muell	Mukhu-Hing	Wal Nut
4. <i>Acerhookeri</i> Miq .	Kharshing-Hing	
5. <i>Cinamomom</i> . . .	Chepsing-Hing	
6. <i>Rhododendron Niveum</i> Hook	Khandak-Hing	Rhododendron

Though bamboo (MA) and cane (KHU) are not abundant in these forests, they exist in remote parts of the village area. The bamboo groves are found about 6-7 miles away, towards South-East, from the main village. Different kinds of bamboo are used for construction of houses, camps and fencing of the cultivation fields where the roofing and partition walls are all done by split bamboos.

Many medicinal and edible fruit-bearing plants, are also found here. Dichroafebrifuge flour, locally known as *Goorbi-shali*, is a plant of medicinal value. The roots and the leafy tops are used for treatment of malarial fever. The fruit of *Rubus ellipticus smith* (Yellow raspberries), locally known as *Mlang-ha*, are edible. *Punica granatum* Linn (Pomegranate) locally known as *Shimbi-Limbi* is also grown in the village, Jabrang, an aromatic pungent spice is found in abundance in the forest and surroundings of the village.

In addition to the above mentioned flora, orchids of various species are also found here. *Dendrodium nobili* Lind, is the most elegant and attractive orchid with heavy bundles of beautiful flowers. Another orchid which exists in this area is *Galeola falconri* Hook.

There are two trees of Deodar species, locally known as Singmu. It is a taboo among the villagers to cut this kind of tree. Singmu is worshipped and the people believe that there resides a God called Fu-Sawang who has given birth to these trees for His shelter. In case the tree is cut the God will be annoyed and the whole village will be in distress.

Fauna

There are many kinds of animals and birds in this area. Tiger (Phaun), Wild Goat (Stan), Barkingdeer (Skhu), Spotted Deer (Juikh), Boar (Skan), Mithun (Hangbodi), Fox (Tsan), Monkey (Judung), Wild Cat (Tankoo), and Porcupine (Sba), are common among wild animals. Cow (Sphu), Horse (Stu), Sheep (Juwa), Bullock (Shyo) and Fowls (Bikhya) are the only domestic animals.

The birds available in most extensive areas, are jungle fowl, eagle, pigeon, dove, owl, wood-pecker, bulbull, fork tail and sparrow. Varieties of beautiful butterflies, snakes, dim-dams and honey-bees are also not uncommon in this area.

Fish is abundant in the nearby rivers and the common type of fish is orinous or hill-trout, locally known as *Nyu-Lang*.

Size of village

The total area of the village is about 11,000 acres or roughly 35 Sq. Kms., and the total cultivated land (in 1961) is about 320 acres only. There are 74 households having total population of 422 persons of whom 205 (48.5%) are males and 217 (51.5%) are females. The average number of members per household

is 5.7. All these households belong to Sherdukpens. The major portion of population is concentrated in the main village; while the hamlets are sparsely populated. There are 5 hamlets *i.e.* Chellen, Brokpoblang, Gecham, Smugchi and Gnau under Rupa. The distances of these hamlets from the main village are 5, 4, 3, 3, and 5 kilometers respectively.

The following table gives the size of the five hamlets by number of households and population :

TABLE 1

Size of hamlets by number of households and population

Sl. No.	Name of Hamlet	No. of households	Population		
			Males	Females	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Chellen	4	16	13	29
2	Brokpoblang	4	11	10	21
3	Gecham	4	14	16	30
4	Smugchi	5	6	11	17
5	Gnau	3	11	9	20
Total		20	58	59	117

The above table shows that only 117 persons (58 males and 59 females) or 27.72% of the total population stay in hamlets and strikingly there are only 20 households or 27.02% of the total households in the village which shows that the distribution of population according to households is identical.

A table giving the distribution of the households by number of members is placed below:—

TABLE 2

Distribution of households by number of members

Sl. No.	Households size (family members)	Number of households
1	2	3
1	1	2
2	2	4
3	3	9
4	4	7
5	5	14
6	6	10
7	7	11
8	8	17
Total		76

The table shows that out of the 74 households 28 are large, each containing 7 to 8 persons, 31 households are medium sized consisting of 4 to 6 persons and 15 households are small consisting of 1 to 3 persons, of which two single member households.

Residential pattern

The village is not laid in any systematic manner and the houses have been built wherever a suitable plot of land is available. Therefore, the whole village is divided into six parts, the five hamlets and main village. These hamlets and the houses are distributed irrespective of clan. The houses in the main village are grouped in three places according to the availability of levelled land. These three places have different names as Bao Thuikhong and Ushir. All these sections are multi-clan. The houses are distributed haphazardly and there is no proper planning in the construction of the houses. Only the provision of Foot Paths is kept before constructing the houses.

Similarly all the hamlets are multi-clan and there is no instance of uniclans hamlet.

Communications

The village is connected by a motorable road from the nearest railway station Missamari, about 132 Kms. in distance. The road from Missamari to Foot-hills (Base Camp and Inner Line Check Post) is almost plain though untarred and it is about 34 Kms. in distance. The road from Foot-hills to Tenga-Valley (about 5 Kms. from Rupa) and onwards is known as 'Bomdi-La Foot-hills' road, climbing the hills up and down throughout the way, is very narrow and risky. Hence, only one way traffic is allowed. The gate timing is fixed by the Political Officer of Kameng Frontier Division and looked after by check post police.

The construction of this Highway was started in 1956 and was completed in 1958. Since then it is being widened and efforts are being made to make it a metalled one. Before the construction of this road, the Divisional Headquarters, Bomdi-La, was connected by a mule track which is still in existence and used frequently during the rainy season when the motorable road is

blocked due to heavy land slides. The village Rupa is five stages from Foot-hills. Recently, another motorable road has been constructed and it is called "Bomdi-La—Bhalukpung" road. This road joins "Bomdi-La—Foot-hills" road at Tenga Valley.

The village is connected with Bomdi-La by a mule track about 15 Kms. long; but one can as well go to Bomdi-La by motorable road which is 19 Kms. in length. It is connected with Circle Headquarters, Kalaktang by a mule track. All the neighbouring villages are connected by foot-tracks.

There is a cantilever bridge made of wooden logs and planks over Ziging Kho river which is the only means to cross the river. This was made by the village people who learnt this art from the neighbouring Monpa people. In Monpa area such indigenous cantilever bridges are very common.

To construct the bridge, stone retaining walls are erected at the site of bridge, on the both banks of river and over each wall many wooden logs (mainly pine trees) of equal length are laid horizontally in such a manner that $\frac{2}{3}$ rd of the length remains on the wall and only $\frac{1}{3}$ rd of the length is kept projecting over the river. The portion of logs resting on walls is covered with heavy pieces of stones and earth. Then the both projecting ends of logs are bridged by three long wooden beams. These beams are later on covered with thick planks. The span of bridge is about 40 feet.

It came to notice that formerly there was a cane bridge over the river Ziging Kho. The remains of lofty stone walls, and for hanging the cane bridge are still at the site. In eastern part of Kameng Division cane suspension bridges are supported by trees on the river banks; but since here the river passes through rocky mountains no such facility is available. Hence, the stone walls are the only means of support. The cane is not found abundantly in this village area. At the time of construction of the bridge cane ropes were brought by the Khowas who were under the subjugation of the Sherdukpens of Rupa and who used to pay tribute by way of service or in kind. These tributes have been stopped after the establishment of effective administration in this area; now the Rupa people have to get cane ropes on payment from Khowas. Therefore, the Rupa people have given up the practice of making cane bridge and taken up the construction of wooden bridge.

Public places

There is one Gumpa (Buddhist Temple) in the heart of the village. It is an old Gumpa and is looked after by a Lama (Buddhist monk) who performs all the Pujas on behalf of the villagers. Religious shrines like *Manes*, *Chhortens* and *Dungzurs* also exist within the boundary of the village. There are 12 Manes, two Chhortens, and two Dungzurs, scattered over the different parts of the village. Besides, there is a Kakaling (stone gate) just at the entrance to the main village. Inside the Kakaling is a square edifice with frescoes in vivid colour. The details about these religious shrines will be given in another chapter of this monograph.

Burial grounds

There are four burial grounds in four directions of the village, namely Manthung in the east, Thonga in the south, Ba in the west and Guchingheen in the north; at distances of $\frac{1}{2}$, 1, $1\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ Kms. respectively from village Gumpa. According to the local custom, the deceased is cremated or buried in a particular direction pointed out by the Lama with the help of his religious book Karchik. Therefore, in each direction, there is one burial or cremation ground.

The most important burial place among these four is Ba. At this place one bunker (underground cell) is constructed to dispose of the dead bodies. The cell is completely closed from all directions, except for a small entrance in the front side of the cell.

It is said that many generations ago, an epidemic broke out in the village and daily several persons became the victims of it. At this stage when lot of casualties occurred, it was not possible to cremate or bury each and every dead body according to customs. Therefore, to remove the dead bodies from the village immediately and dispose them of, this cell was constructed. This very cell is still used as a crematorium by the poor people of the village who are ordered by the Lama to dispose of their deceased in the West of the village. The dead is taken to Ba and kept inside the cell where no cremation or burial is required. The body is automatically decomposed after some time by natural action leaving the skeleton only.

Sources of water

Rivers provide the only source of drinking water. There is a water channel in the village which carries water from the river Dunik Kho to run the prayer wheel fitted in Dungzur, located

near the village. Therefore, some households of the village and Government Staff stationed at Rupa, tap the water from Dungzur. There are no sources of spring water or wells in the village.

Local shops

During 1961 there were only two shops in the village, one belonging to a Nepali man named Shri Jog Bahadur who married a Sherdukpen girl of Rupa, and another belonging to the Rupa villagers.

Welfare and administrative institution

There is one 'Adult Training Centre' (Now Rupa Welfare Centre) at Rupa. It was established in April 1963 by 'Bhartiya Adimjati Sewak Sangh', on the initiative of a social worker from Bihar Shri Narayanji.

This Centre has started one weaving section. The instructor had received her training from the Craft Centre at Bomdi-La. In 1964, nine girls were receiving training in this centre. They were provided with free lodging and boarding facilities in the hostel of the centre.

The centre also runs a boy's hostel. In 1964, eleven boys were provided with free boarding and lodging facilities in the hostel. They used to receive primary education in the school run by the W.C.Y.D. administration. Besides, they were taught the fundamental rules of morals of the centre. On Sundays and holidays they worked in the agricultural demonstration field attached to the centre, acquired some knowledge about modern agricultural methods.

The centre has also set up a small poultry form with the assistance provided by the agriculture department of N.E.F.A. administration.

There are in total seven buildings belonging to this 'Adult Training Centre'. These buildings are made of wooden frame having mud plastered wall and bamboo roofs. These were constructed by the villagers on contract basis and the expenses were borne by the 'Bhartiya Adimjati Sewak Sangh'

Besides, School and Hospital buildings, there are seven residential buildings in the village, meant for the staff of School, Hospital and Central Public Works Department.

Postal facilities

Though, there is no branch Post Office at Rupa, the mail is delivered thrice a week by the Dak-runners of the Political Department. These Dak-runners are regular Government employees and each out-post or Administrative Centre of this Division maintains communication with the outside world with the help of the Dak-runners.

History of village

The Sherdukpens claim that long ago their (ancestor) Japtang Bura, son of a Tibetan king named Ba Srongsen Gompu, was ordered by his father to rule over the present territory of Sherdukpens. He started his journey with his porters and servants and crossed the Frontier. First he camped in Monpa area, near *But* (a village under the N.E.F.A. Administrative Circle of Kameng Division). Rupa is not the original name of the village. The Sherdukpens call it Thongthuk. In their dialect "Thuk" means village and Thongthuk means, the village of the Thong people,—Thong being the dominant clan of the village. The name Rupa is supposed to have been given to it by the people of the plains. It is believed that when money was introduced in this area, the transactions in cash between the people of the hills and the plains used to take place in this village; hence, the name Rupa, meaning silver coin came to be associated with it. In course of time this name became more popular.

In 1943, when Kalaktang administrative circle was established in this outlying region, Rupa became its headquarters. For 14 years the headquarters continued here. Later on it was shifted to Kalaktang,—at a distance of about 75 Kms.

Establishment of new villages and hamlets of the Sherdukpens

As already mentioned Rupa is recognised as the mother village of the Sherdukpens. Later on due to pressure of population, a section went out and settled a new village, Shergaon at a distance of 32 Kms. from Rupa. It seems that those new settled at Shergaon were able to assert their separate identity and right to manage their own affairs, quite early. But the process of branching out of new settlements did not stop with it. As the people were mainly engaged in shifting cultivation, in the course of their cultivation cycle, they had to clear out jungle patches, at long distance from the village. It was not convenient to return to the village, after every day's work during the busy season. So, they had to construct temporary huts near the fields. In course of

time, groups of households tended to carry on jhum cycles in distinct blocks and set up semi-permanent settlement near those blocks. Thus a process of segmentation set in. These semi-permanent settlements or sub-villages are known as pams. (Pam is an Assamese word for jhum hut in jhum field.) Till recently there were ten sub-villages or pams attached to Rupa. They were Jigaon, Jomiam, Thaugreo, Mimbatur, Mokhuthing, Chellen, Gecham, Brokpoblang, Smugchi and Gnau.

With the establishment of effective administration in Kameng division, Jigaon was declared as a separate village, with its own council of gaon Buras (village chiefs) and members. The people of Rupa village strongly resented this step; they asserted that Jigaon was their sub-village, and should remain within their jurisdiction. But the people of the Jigaon had a different view in this matter and the Administration stuck to its decision to give separate recognition to Jigaon.

In 1959-60, there was a move to give the status of village to three more pams, viz., Thangeo, Jomian and Mukhuthing. The people of Rupa were very much excited over it; they held a meeting and protested against this move. The administration, on its part, responded to the popular mood and Rupa still continues to be the main village and the sub-villages continue to be associated with it.

Origin of the tribe

The people are of Tibetan origin. The history of origin of the Sherdukpens as noted by Sharma (1961) is as follows:—

The Tibetan King Be Srongtsen Gompo used to live in Devalajari in Lhasa with his Tibetan queen Be Mu Za, by whom he had a son, called Gepu Roding Dorjee Chhung. In course of time he heard that the King of Assam had a very beautiful daughter and he began to long for her. He, therefore, sent his ablest Minister Rigpu Chhan, to Sibsagar to ask for her hand in marriage. In the beginning, the Ahom King was reluctant to send his daughter to a distant, unknown land and made the Minister pass through a series of severe tests before he agreed to the alliance and sent his daughter with the Minister.

At last they set out on their journey homewards and came to the Brahmaputra and crossed over the other side. There the Minister seduced the princess. The party finally arrived at Devalajari after passing through Sibsagar, Satiya, Morshing, Bumla and Tsona. The king of Lhasa was delighted to see his new bride and married her with great pomp and ceremony. Soon afterwards, however, he noticed to his great dismay that his wife was pregnant. He realized that his Minister had betrayed him and so the Minister was imprisoned and punished.

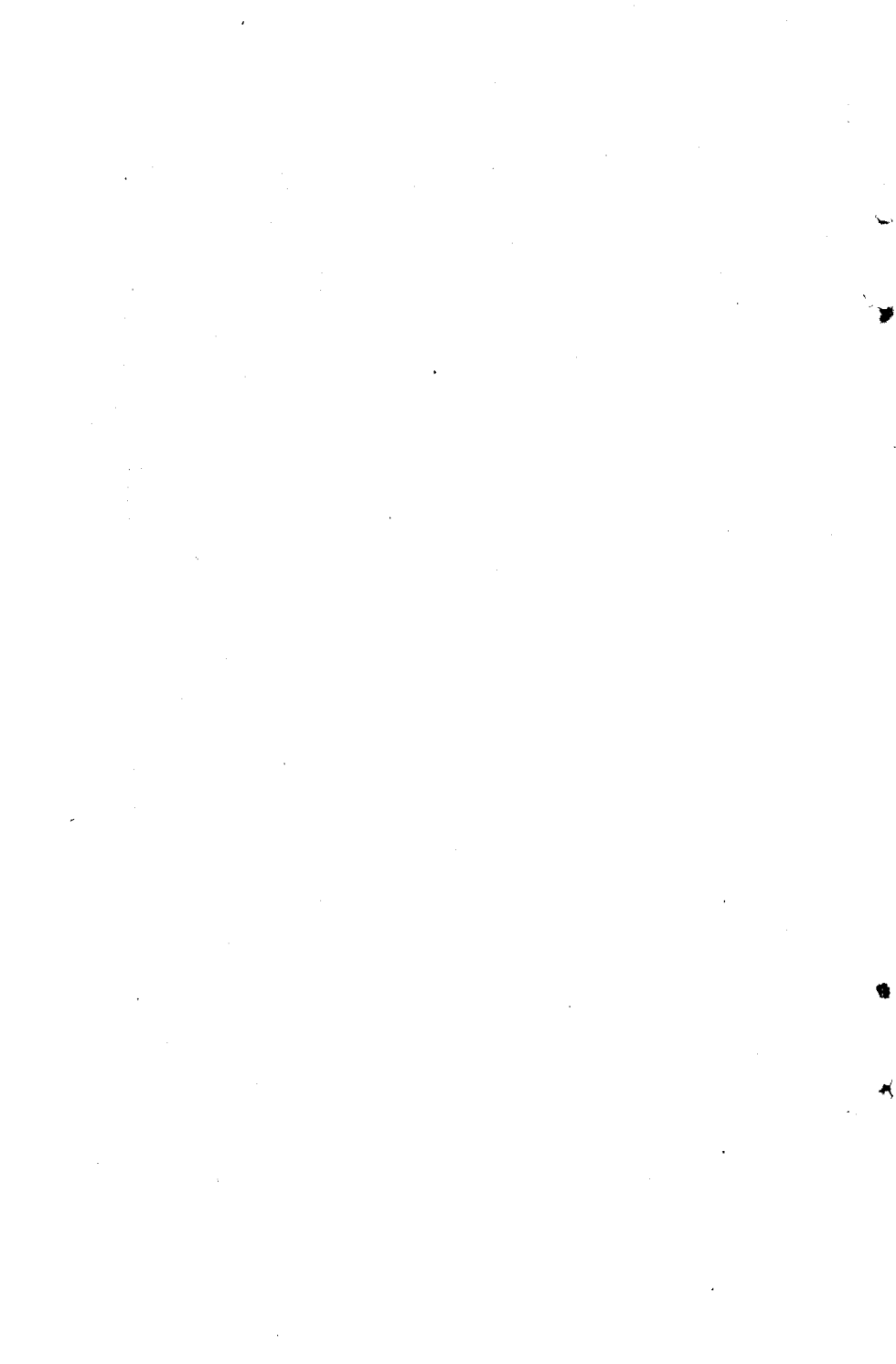
The child, that was born, had the body of a human being, the face of a dog and the horns of a goat, and was accordingly named Khi Bu Rowa. When the king saw him, he had the child taken to the forest and left there to die.

As the king deeply loved his beautiful young wife he forgave her previous act of infidelity. In course of time, he had two sons by her, the elder was named Jabung Ngowang Namje and the younger Japtang Bura. Japtang Bura took over the present Sherdukpens territory and thus became the first "Sherdukpen King".

Route of migration

Japtang Bura first halted near Lumpu in Panchen area (Lumla Circle of Kameng Division) and after a short stay there, he had his first encounter with Bangnis (a tribe inhabiting the Eastern part of Kameng) who used to make frequent raids in this area. He, with his train of porters and servants defeated the Bangni raiders and followed them for fifteen days march, till the latter reached their present home land. There he married a beautiful and fairy-like girl named Stang Ma, who is supposed to be the daughter of a King ruling over and beyond the Gorichen (high snow-capped mountain in the border of Tawang Sub-Division in Kameng Division) towards Tibet. He returned to Panchen with his bride and brought along with him many tails of an animal called Mao-ja-Aming and offered the same to the Panchen people, which they regard as a sacred possession till now. Japtang Bura was very much liked by the Panchen people for his heroic deeds and rendering peace in this area.

After sometime, Japtang Bura again resumed his journey towards South and came to *But* via Mago and Luguthang. He could not stay at *But* peacefully due to the troubles created by the neighbouring tribes and shifted to the present Rupa area. The name of the place where he first set up his capital is Thuik-zong, about four kilometers away from the present habitation site towards Bomdi-La.



CHAPTER II

THE PEOPLE

Ethnic composition

The descendants of Japtang Bura and his servants and porters are called Sherdukpens. Though there are two classes of Sherdukpens, one socially superior to the other, there are no physical features to distinguish one class from the other.

The Sherdukpens belong to Mongoloid stock in appearance. They have fair complexion, flat faces and prominent cheek bones with straight black hair. Their eyes are usually pale to blue and they are of medium height.

Different classes

As has been mentioned above, the Sherdukpens are divided into two classes. The superior class is known as THONG and the inferior one is known as CHHAO. The THONGS are regarded as socially superior because of their royal origin while the CHHAOS are inferior as they were the subjects of THONGS. These two classes ordinarily avoid connubial relation with one another.

Each of the two classes is divided into a number of exogamous clans.

The Chhaos, though socially inferior, form an inseparable part of the local population. Both the classes are believed to have originated from Tibet and settled together in the present Rupa valley. As a tradition, the Chhaos are supposed to work in the agricultural fields of the Thongs, carry their loads or beddings from one place to another, help them in construction of house and other household chores.

A Chhao can never aspire to become a Thong. The social inferiority is manifested on various occasions. For instance in religious ceremonies the Chhaos are asked to sit at a lower position and behind the Thongs. Also the religious offerings and eatables in various ceremonies are only distributed by the Thongs and not by the Chhaos.

As a custom, a Chhao cannot marry a Thong girl and similarly a Thong cannot marry a Chhao girl. But a Chhao can dine with Thongs and he is free to move about the kitchen and other parts of house of a Thong and handle the utensils without any

CHAPTER III

ECONOMIC LIFE

Economic resources

The total land under cultivation during a particular year is about 320.5 acres. This includes land under permanent and *Jhum* Cultivation. The total land under permanent cultivation is about 45 acres which is mostly around the main village; the remaining 275.5 acres of land is under *Jhum* Cultivation and is spread in different parts of the forest closer to the hamlets.

The village is rich in forest wealth. The wooden poles, planks, cane, bamboo for house construction and fencing for cultivation fields are obtained from there. The people collect and eat many types of wild fruits and extract a good quantity of honey from bee-hives in the jungle. They use the latter for their own consumption as well as for sale in the near by markets. In the vicinity of the village, a wild thorny bush locally known as *Shevin* (an aromatic pungent spice) and more commonly known all over Western Kameng Division as *Jabrang* is found in abundance. It is an important plant from the economic point of view. Its seeds or fruits are sold in the plains villages of Assam and bring ready cash to them. It is used as a medicine, as well as spice with vegetables and fish. *Jabrang* grows wild in the waste land of the village. It is a coniferous plant with innumerable thorns and grows upto the height of 8 to 10 feet. The main branches separate right from the ground level, and later on the twigs and its leaves grow in such a way that the plant looks like a green cone. It starts bearing fruits from the month of July-August and is ready for harvesting in the month of October. The small grey-coloured fruits are collected by children and women after harvesting the summer crops. It is dried and stored inside the house till the villagers go to Doimara.

There is no cultivable waste or current waste land in the village. The cattle graze in jungle and no pastures are there. About 15 acres of land is lying waste where nothing can be grown. The total acreage of land under homesteads including those in the hamlets is about 8 acres.

CHAPTER IV

SOCIAL LIFE

Social and cultural life

During the survey, the population of Rupa was found to be 422 persons, consisting of 205 males and 217 females.

The following table gives the distribution of the population by age groups:—

TABLE 15
Classification of Population according to age group

Sl. No.	Age Group	Population			Remarks
		Total	Males	Females	
1	0—4	67	33	34	
2	5—9	59	35	24	
3	10—14	36	26	30	
4	15—19	39	19	20	
5	20—24	40	19	21	
6	25—29	32	20	12	
7	30—34	28	9	19	
8	35—39	32	20	12	
9	40—44	12	4	8	
10	45—49	14	6	8	
11	50—54	12	8	4	
12	55—59	12	2	10	
13	60 & above	19	4	15	
	Total	422	205	217	

The table shows that per 1000 males there are 1058 females. But interestingly enough upto the age of 39, the males outnumber females; it is only in the age-groups above 40, that the female outnumber the males. In the age group 60 and above, the disparity is rather startling. As against 4 males there are 15 females in this age-group. It appears that the sex ratio in this village is the function of higher longevity among the females. The factors contributing to this, or rather to the lower longevity of the males require to be studied in depth with particular reference to the food and work habits and other aspects of the way of life of the males and females respectively. Though some information was collected about these aspects, it was not possible to relate the same to the vital events of the community during the present rapid survey.

CHAPTER V

Conclusion*

The descriptive account furnished in the body of the text, brings out the fact that Rupa, does not represent a single spatial entity or social organisation; it stands for diverse orbits of spatial and social organisation superimposed on one another.

The village has been delineated in space, in different ways, at different times, by different people. There is not a single Rupa, but a number of Rupas. This is at the same time a source of flexibility as well as of tension, in the social and political relations of the villagers with the outside and also among themselves.

One way to physically identify Rupa, is to consider it in term of the territory recognised by the administration, that belongs to it. But this territory is not the same, as the one recognised by the Sherdukpens of Rupa. Previously they considered Jigaon, situated at a distance of 13 Km. from the main residential cluster of Rupa, to be a part of the village. But it appears that the people of Jigaon did not like to remain clubbed with Rupa, under the same administrative policy at the village level. This unwillingness was more related to the social distance between the people of Rupa and Jigaon, than to the physical distance between these two places.

Though to the outsiders, the people of Jigaon are also Sherdukpens, to the Sherdukpens of Rupa and other villages of the tribe, they are Sherdukpens of lesser shade; they are more commonly known as Yanlaks. They are supposed to be persons of Bhutia origin, who were adept in smithy, and were allowed by the Sherdukpens of Rupa to settle in their territory a few generations ago. They were required to carry out smithy work and also to render certain ceremonial services during the seasonal migration of the Sherdukpens to the foot hills. The Yanlaks, therefore, were a satellite community and the land occupied by them was a sub-village.

When the Government recognised Jigaon as a separate village, it was not merely an act of administrative rearrangement, but precursor to a social upheaval. The satellite community gained in

*The responsibility for the conclusion entirely belongs to Dr. R.K. Roy Burman.



Plate 1. Gaon burah with his wife.

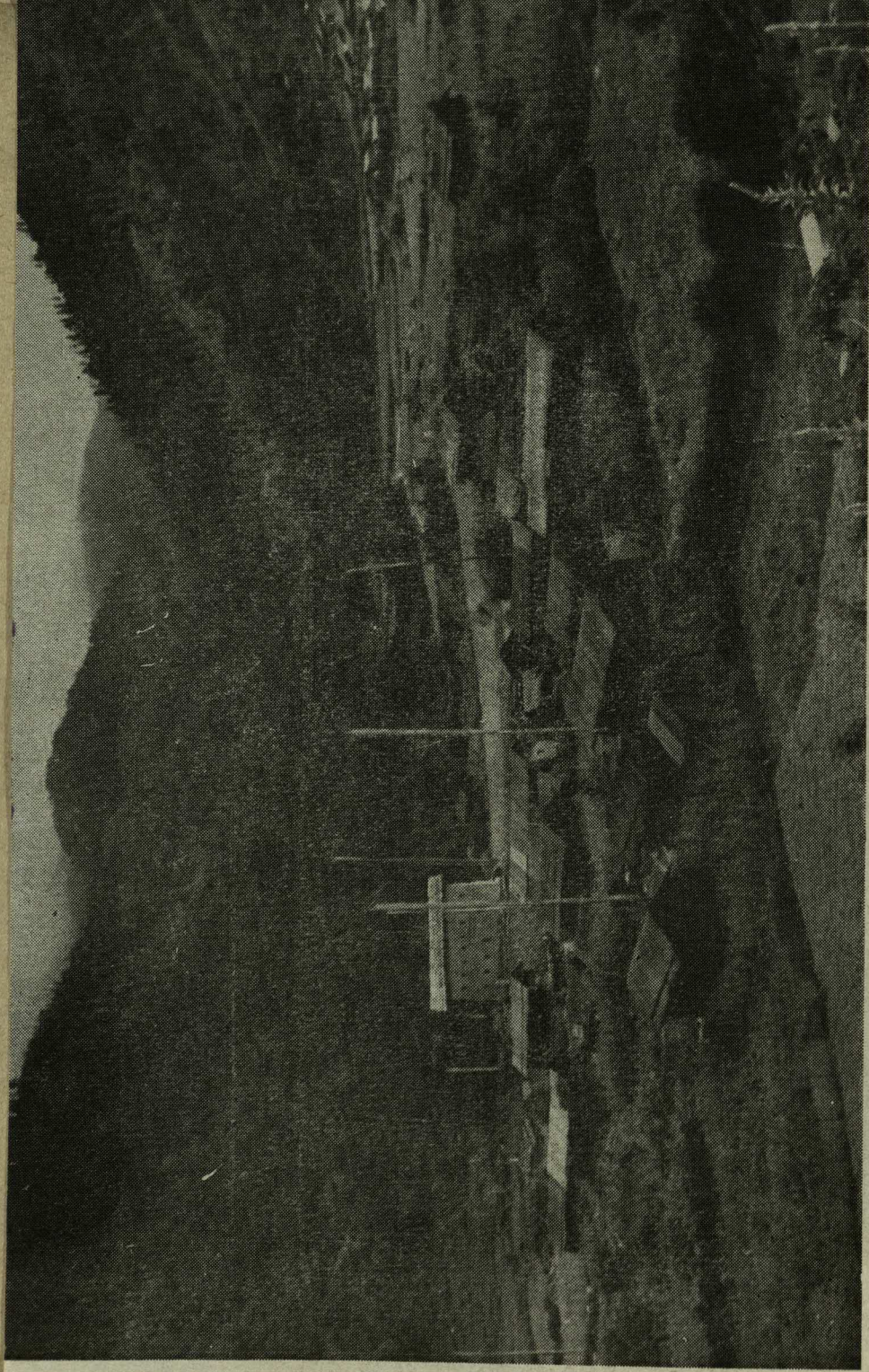


Plate 2. A view of the village showing the topography.

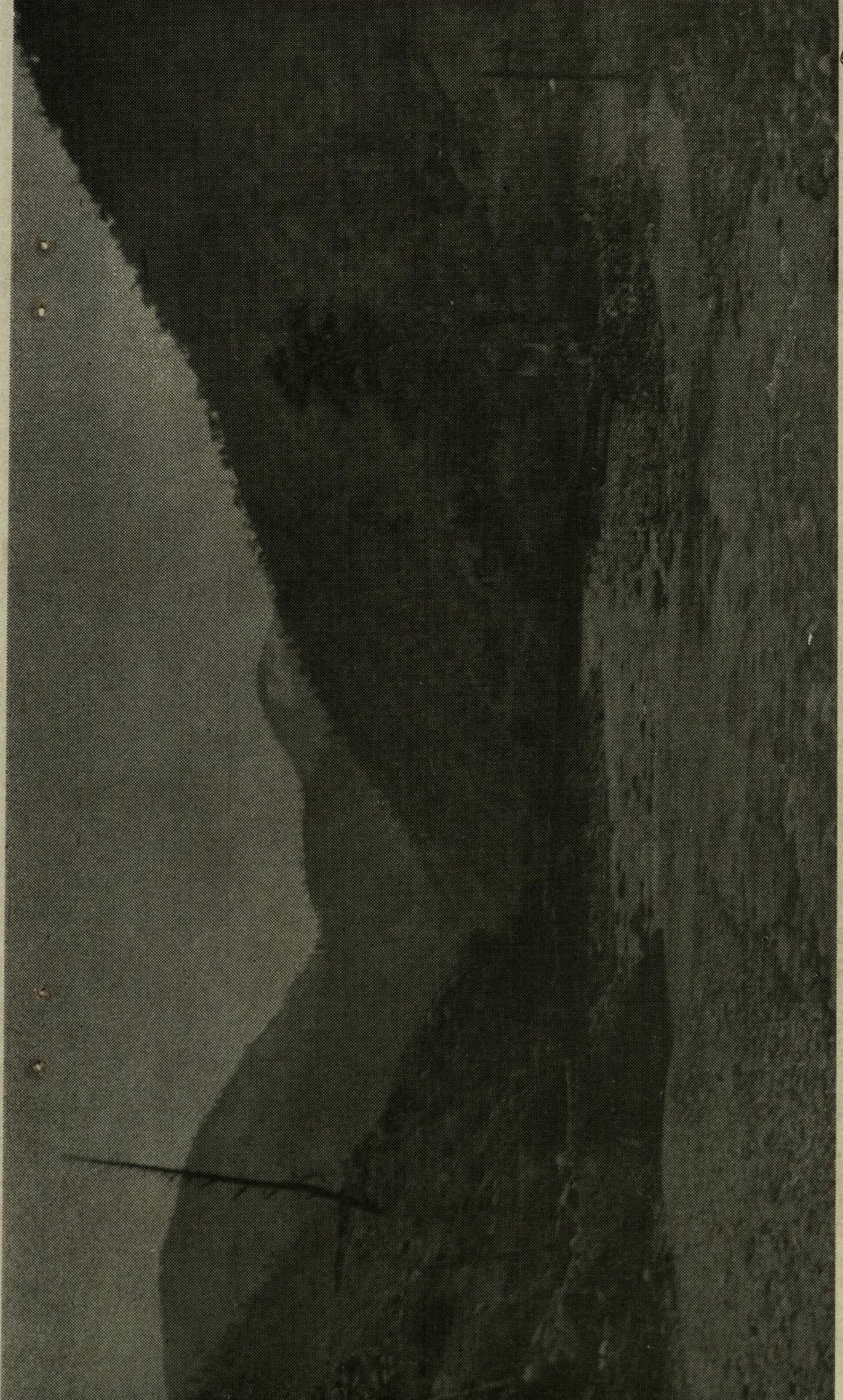


Plate 3. A distant view of canti level bridge over the river Ziging Kho.

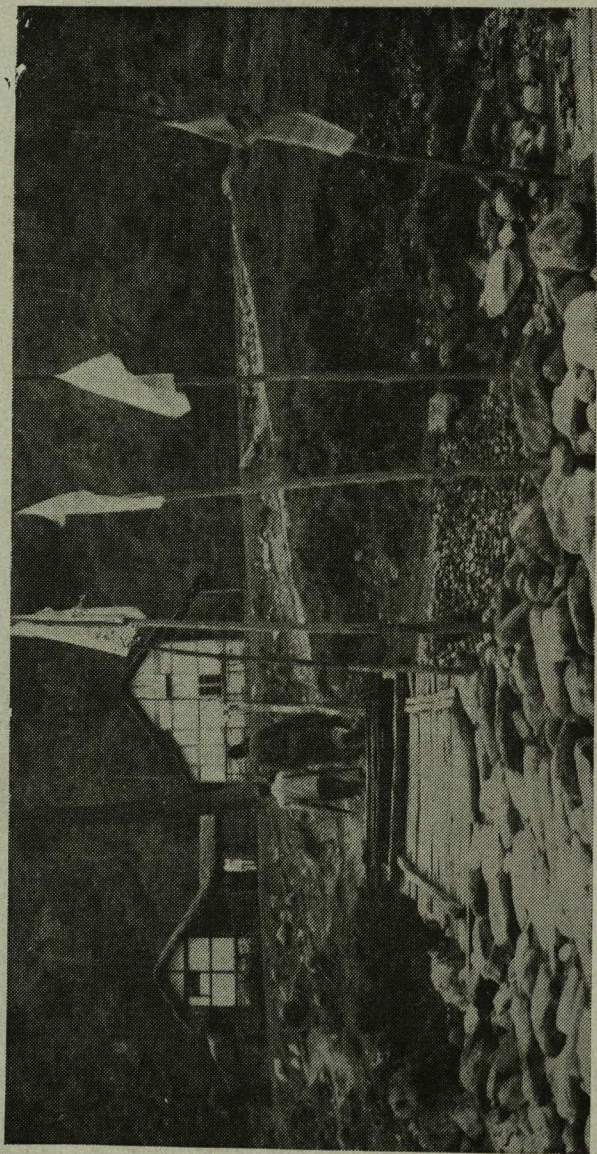


Plate 4. Flag post erected near the bridge over the river Duphla Kho (Ziging Kho).

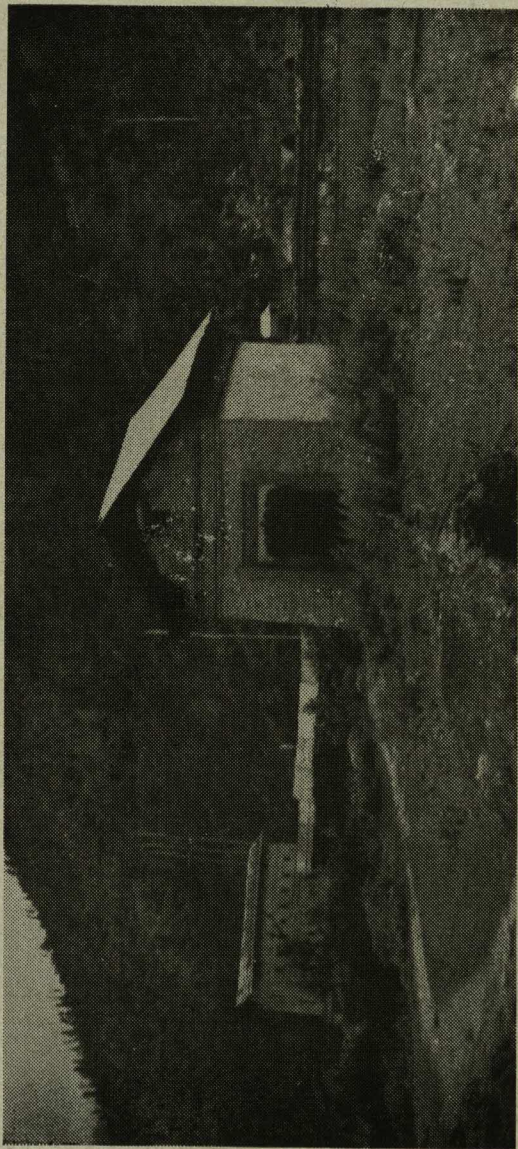


Plate 5. Kakaling (village) with Gompa on the left side.

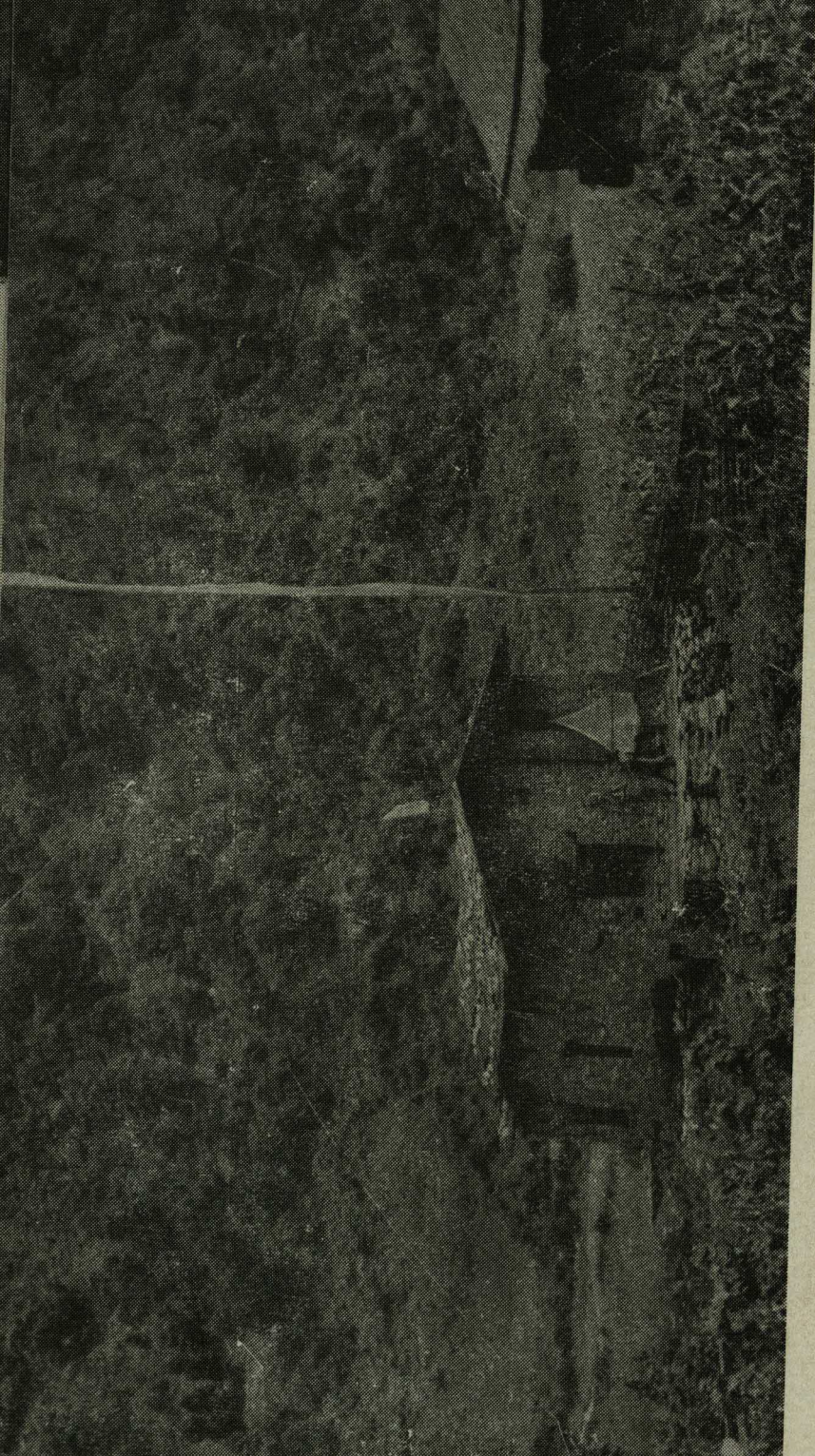


Plate 6. Stone (Size 46' x 19' x 16').

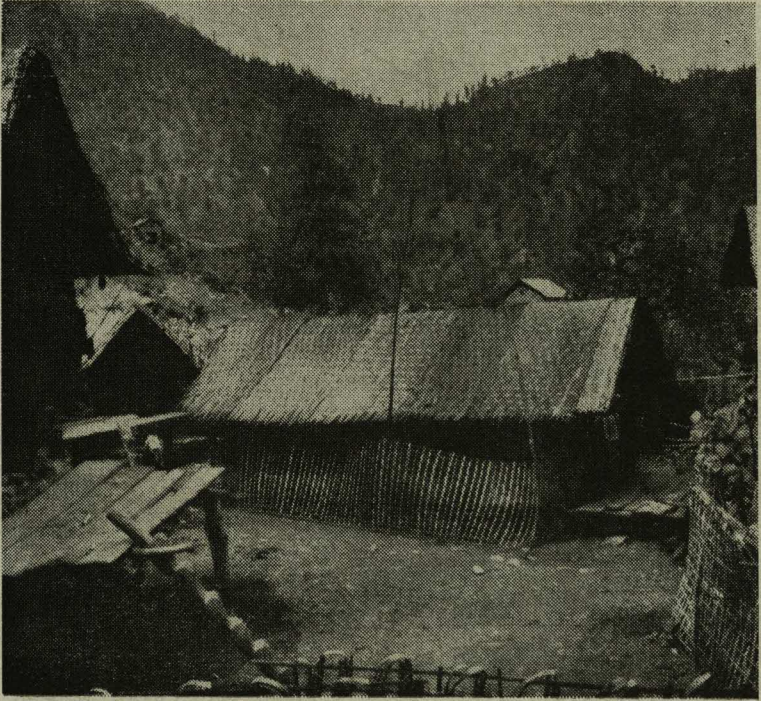


Plate 7. Hut Type House.



Plate 8. Wooden Plank House (Size 45' × 18' × 18').

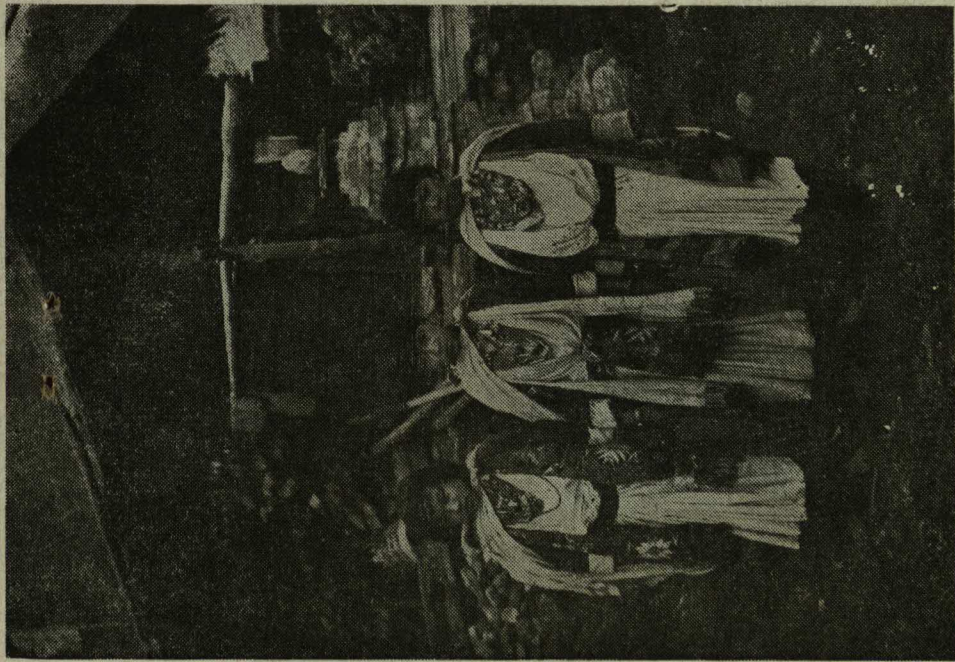


Plate 9. Group of Sherdukpen girls in ceremonial dress.



Plate 10. Sherdukpen girls in day-to-day dress.

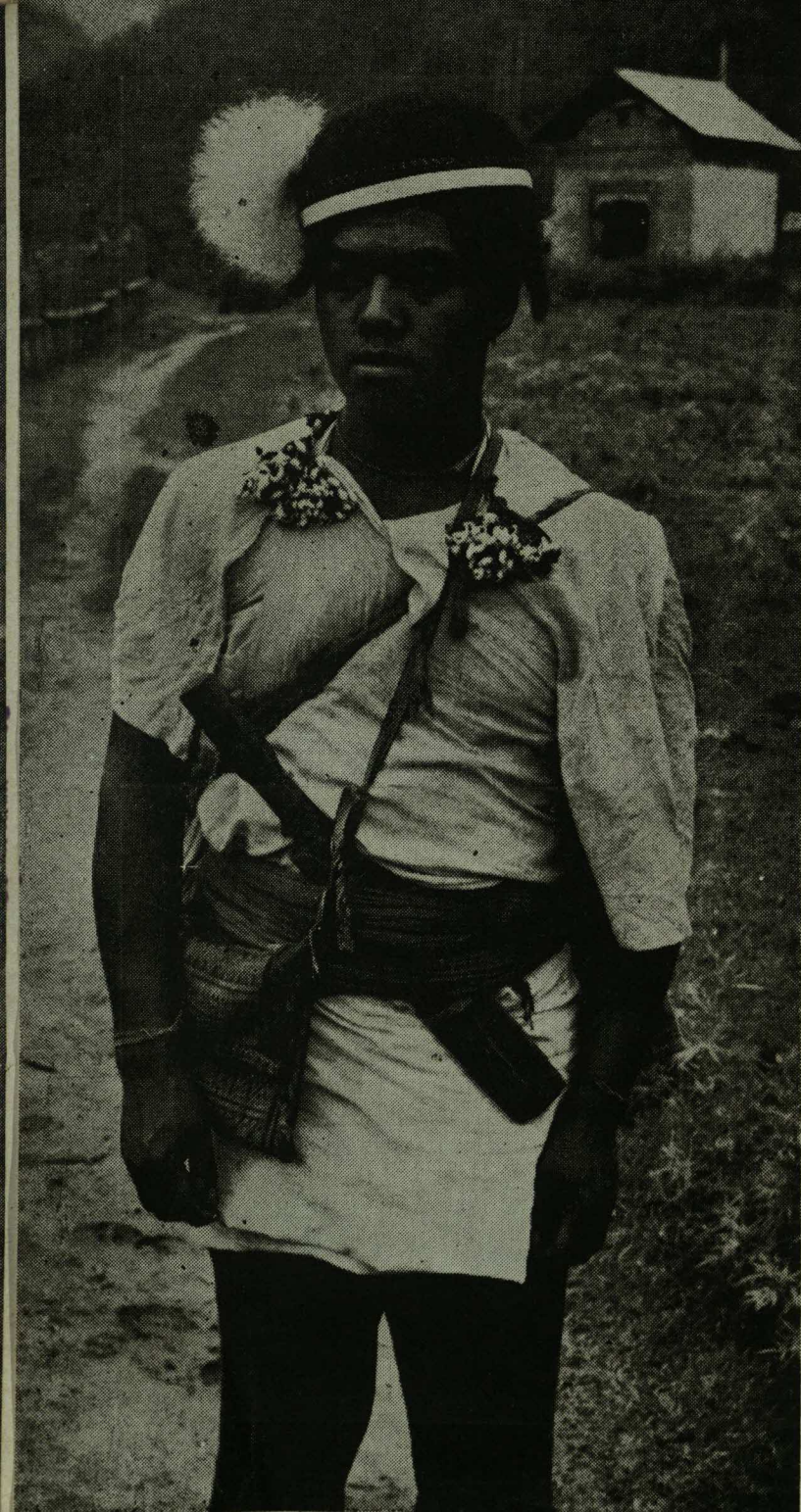


Plate 11.

A village
youth in
traditional dress.



Plate 12. A village damsel in ceremonial dress.

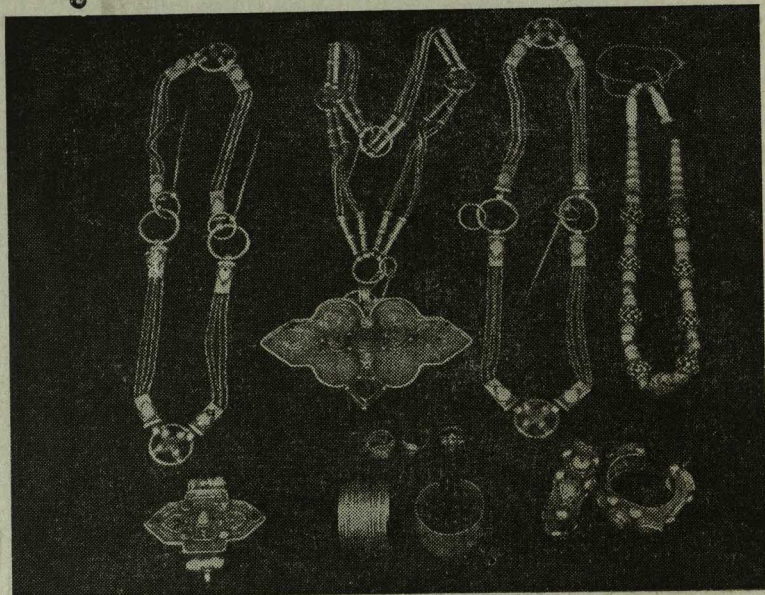


Plate 13. Ornaments



Plate 14. Utensils

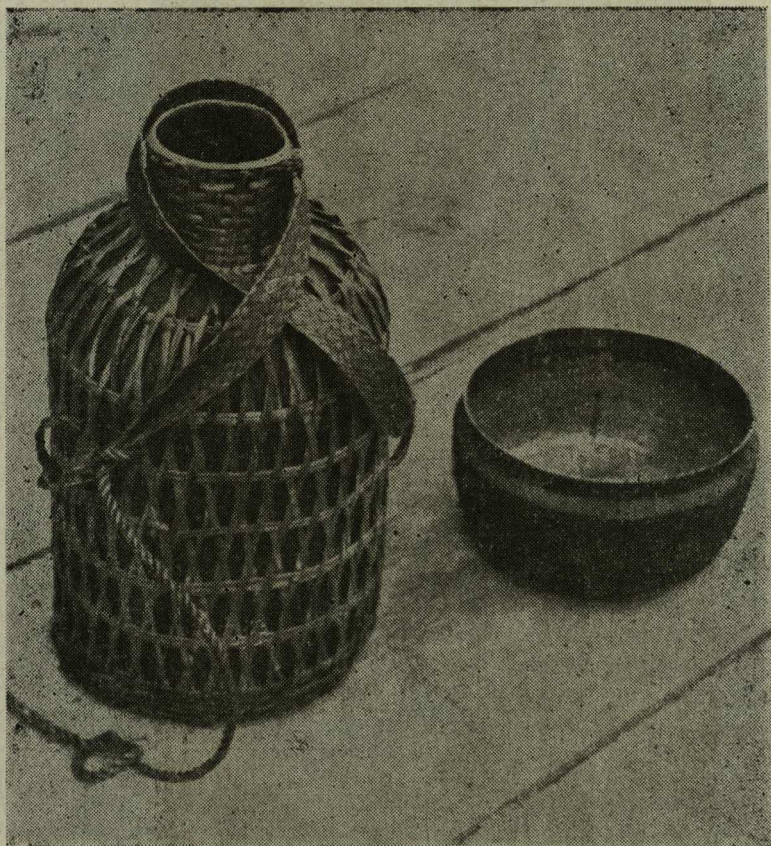


Plate 15. Water carrier and Pan (*Midir* and brass *Dekchi*).

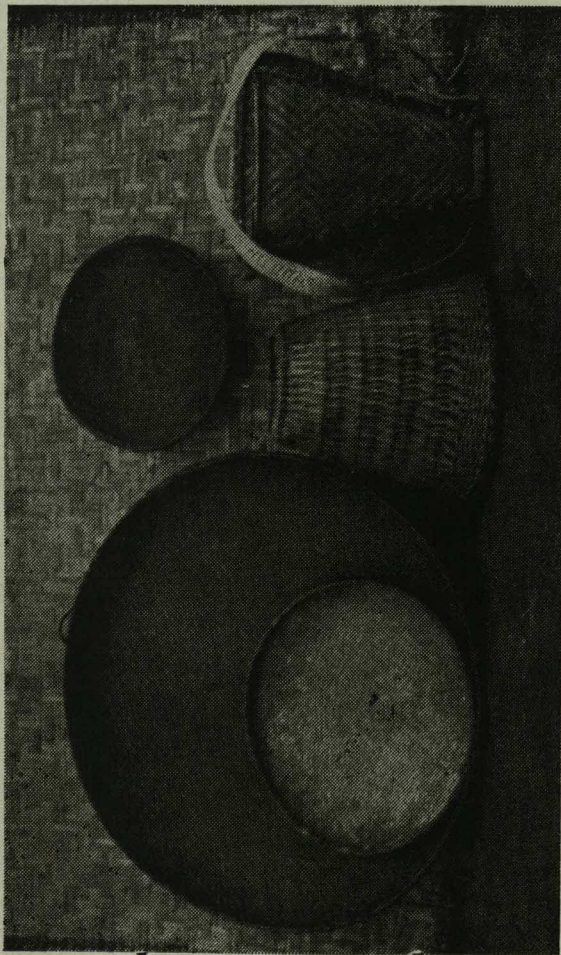


Plate 16. Bamboo baskets.

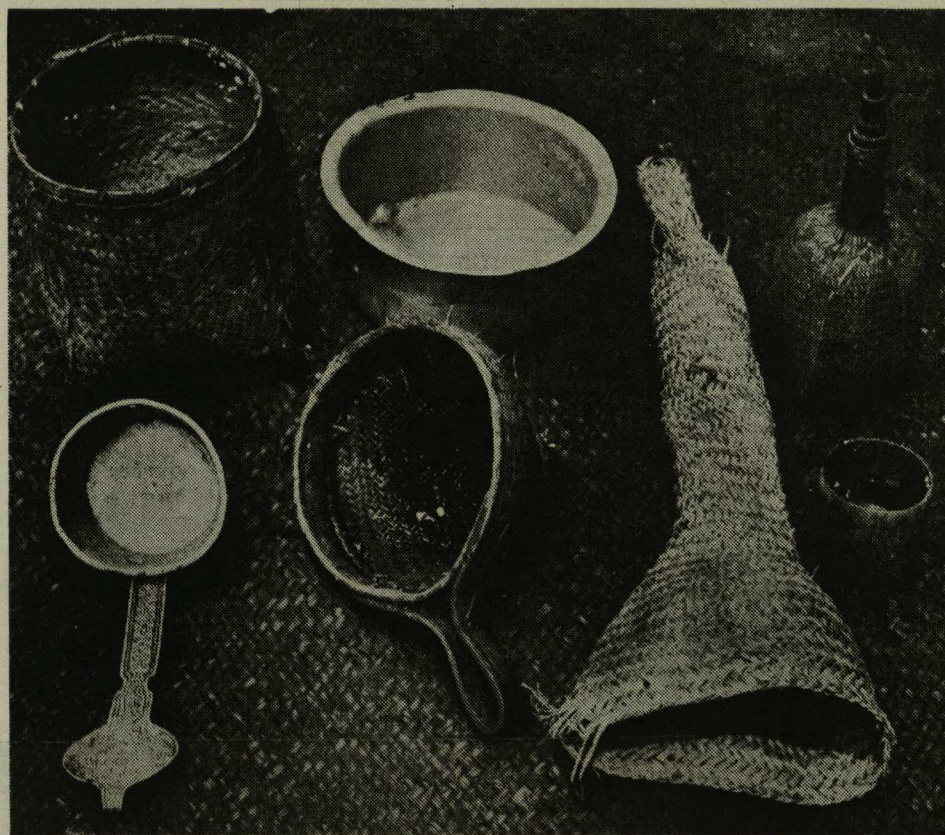


Plate 17. Utensils for making local bear.

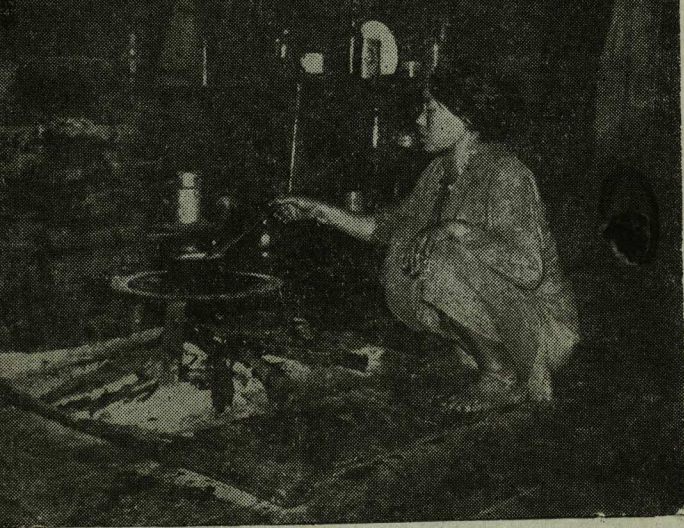


Plate 18. A Sherdukpen woman cooking the food.

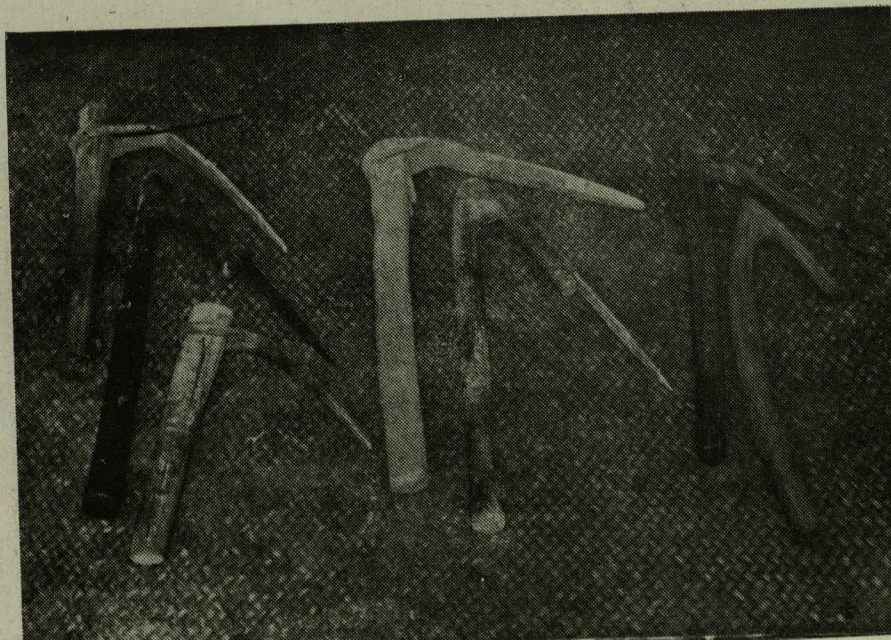
Plate 19. Ploughing the field.





Plate 20. A woman with her daughter working in the cultivation field.

Plate 21. Agricultural Implements. (Chhampao and Chhigi).



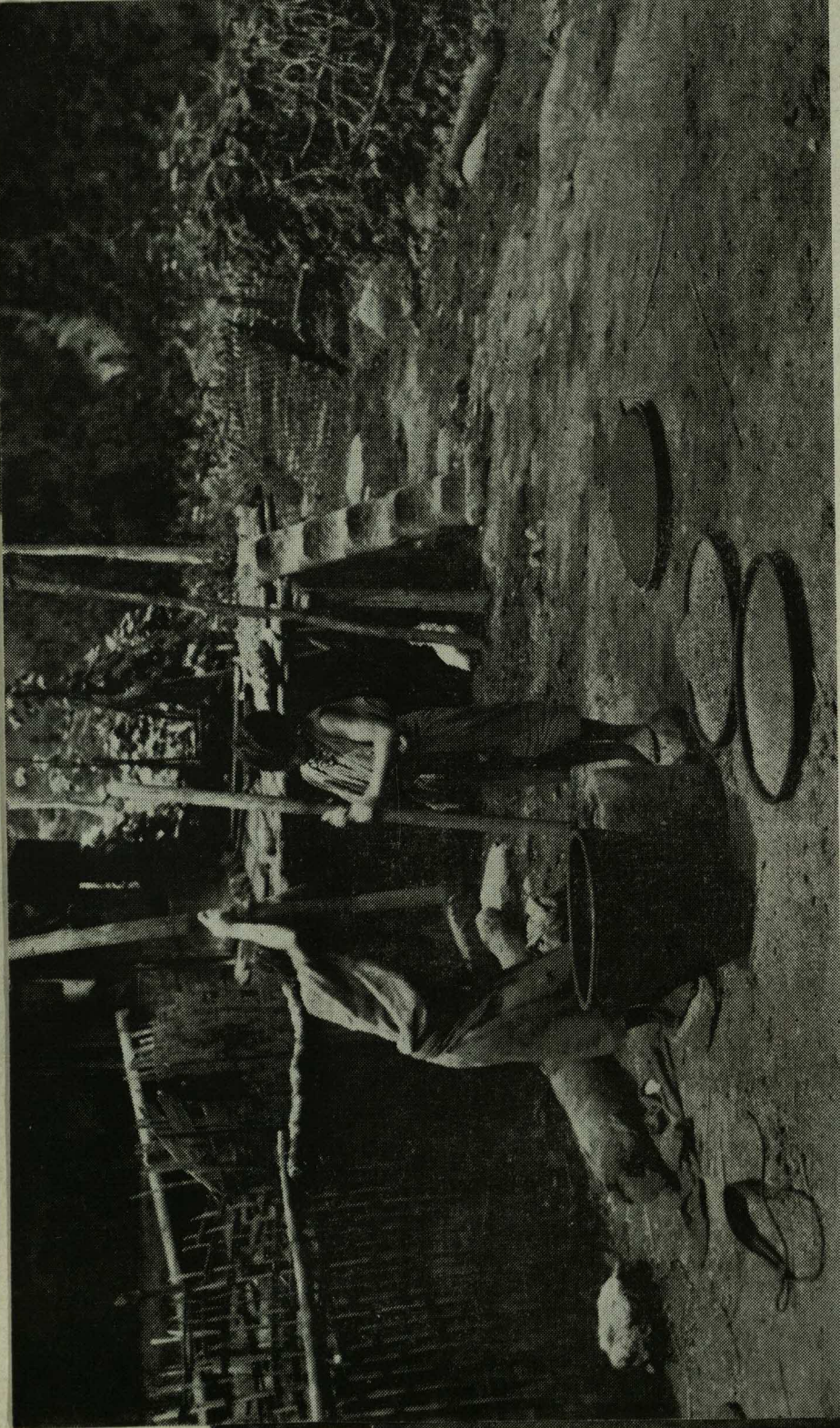


Plate 22. Sherdukpen girls pounding paddy.



Plate 23. A woman grinding the maize.

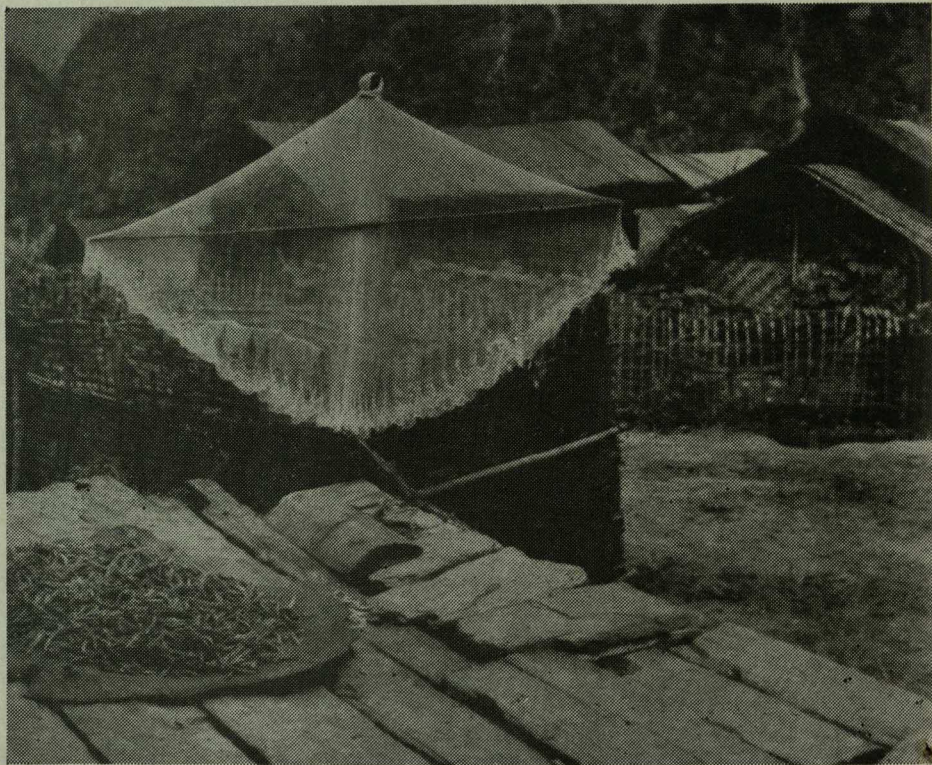


Plate 24. Fishing Net (made locally).

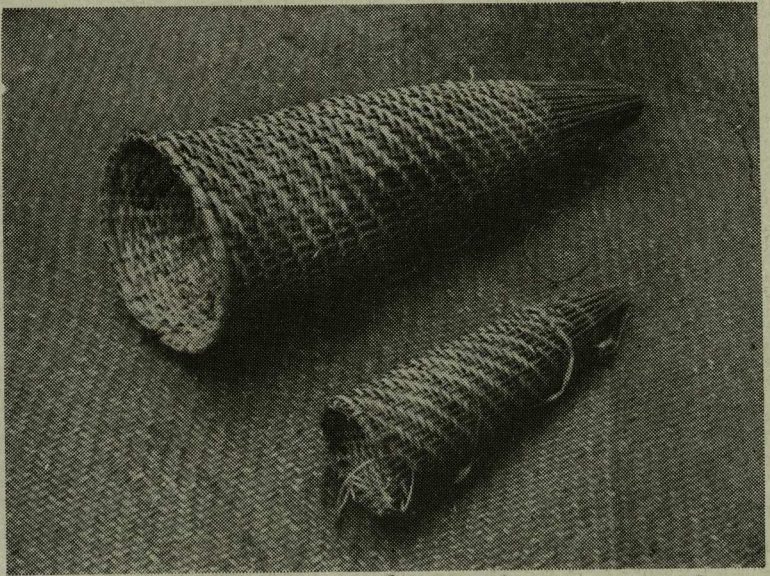


Plate 25. Fishing Trap.



Plate 26. An old man at loom (Daun-Thobrang).

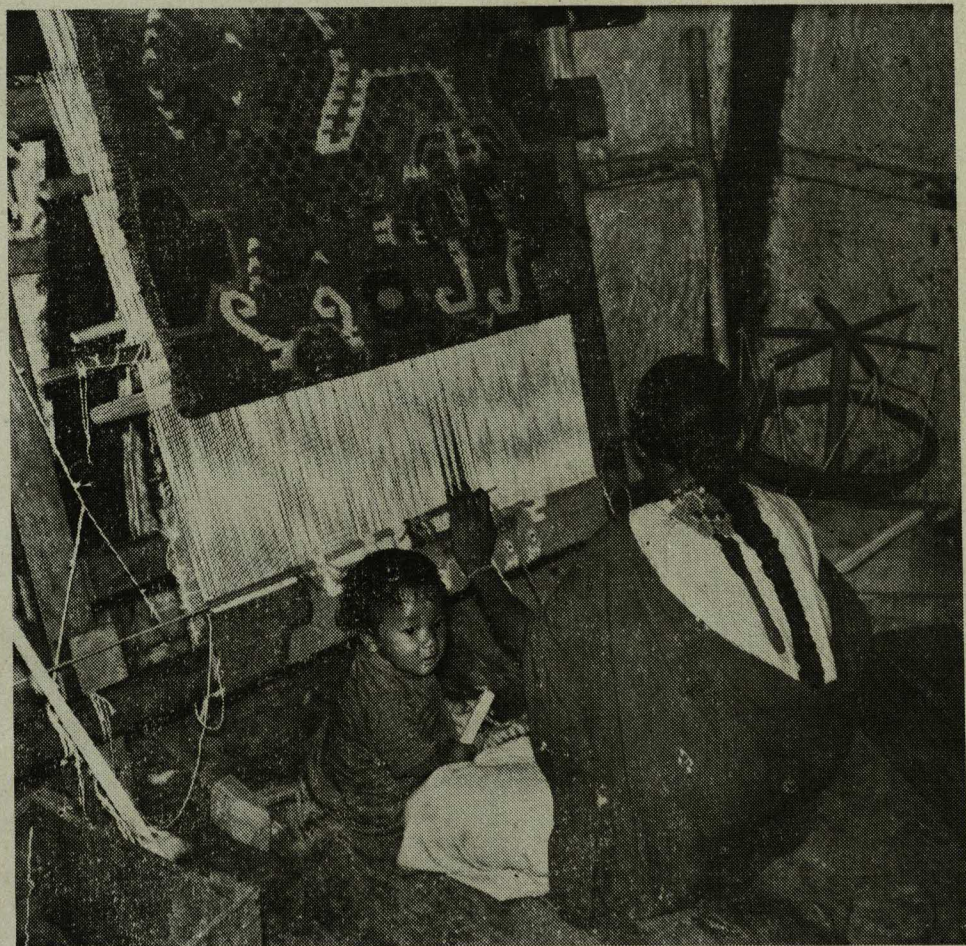


Plate 27. A Sherdukpen girl making carpet at a centre run by Adim Jati Sewak Sang.

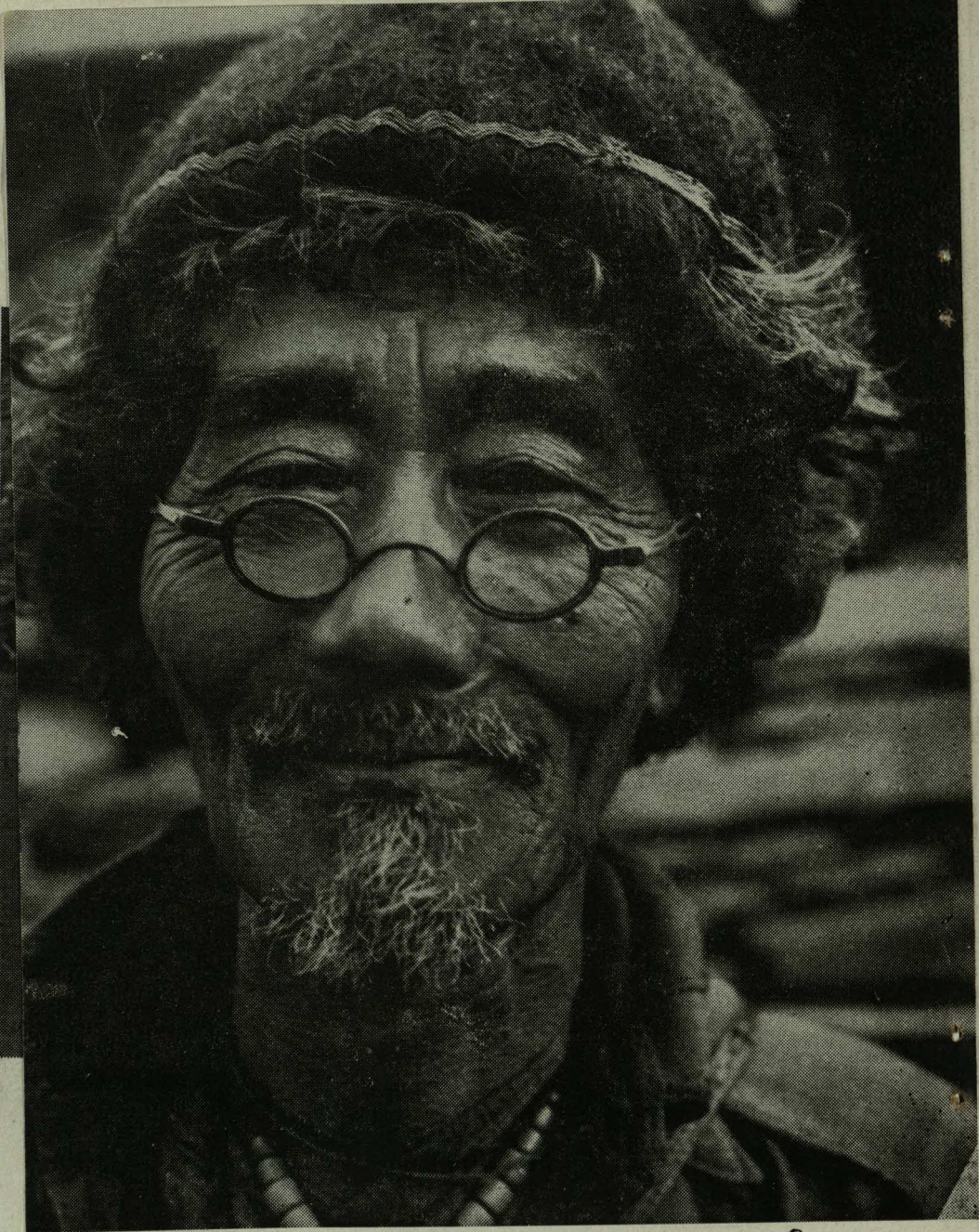


Plate 28. A village craftsman (Silversmith).



Plate 29. Silver Daos of different size.

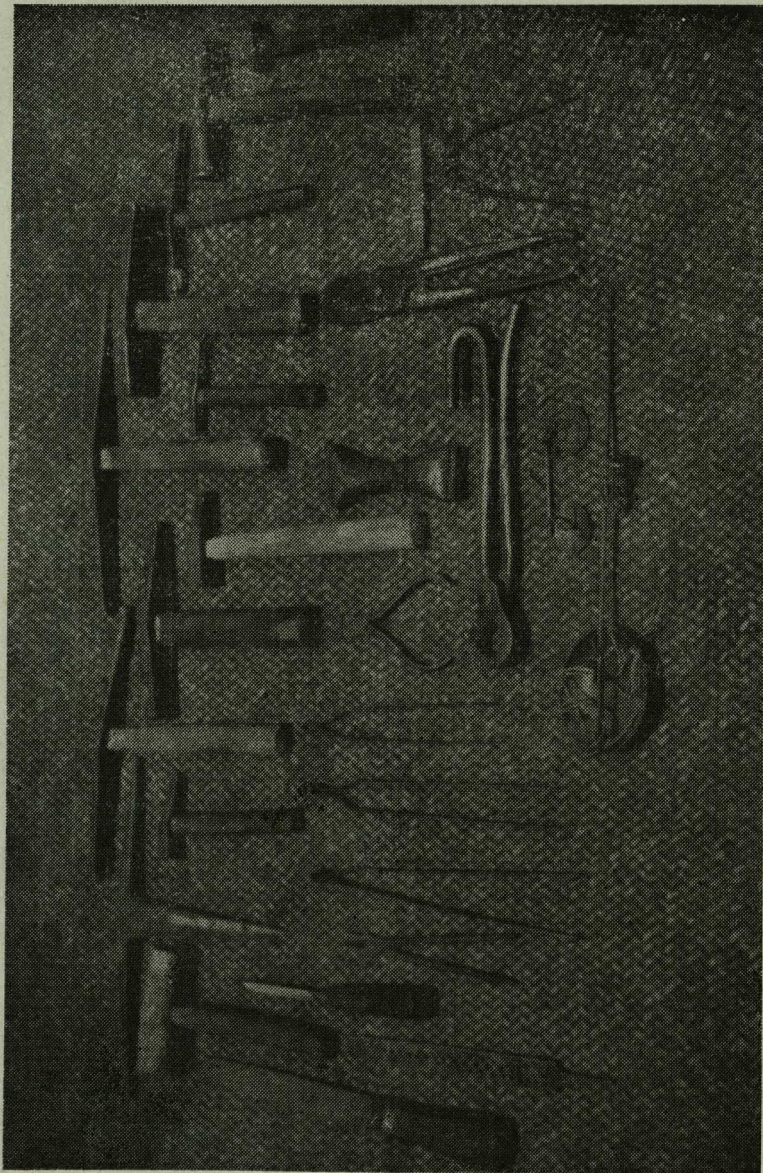


Plate 30. Tools use by silversmith.*

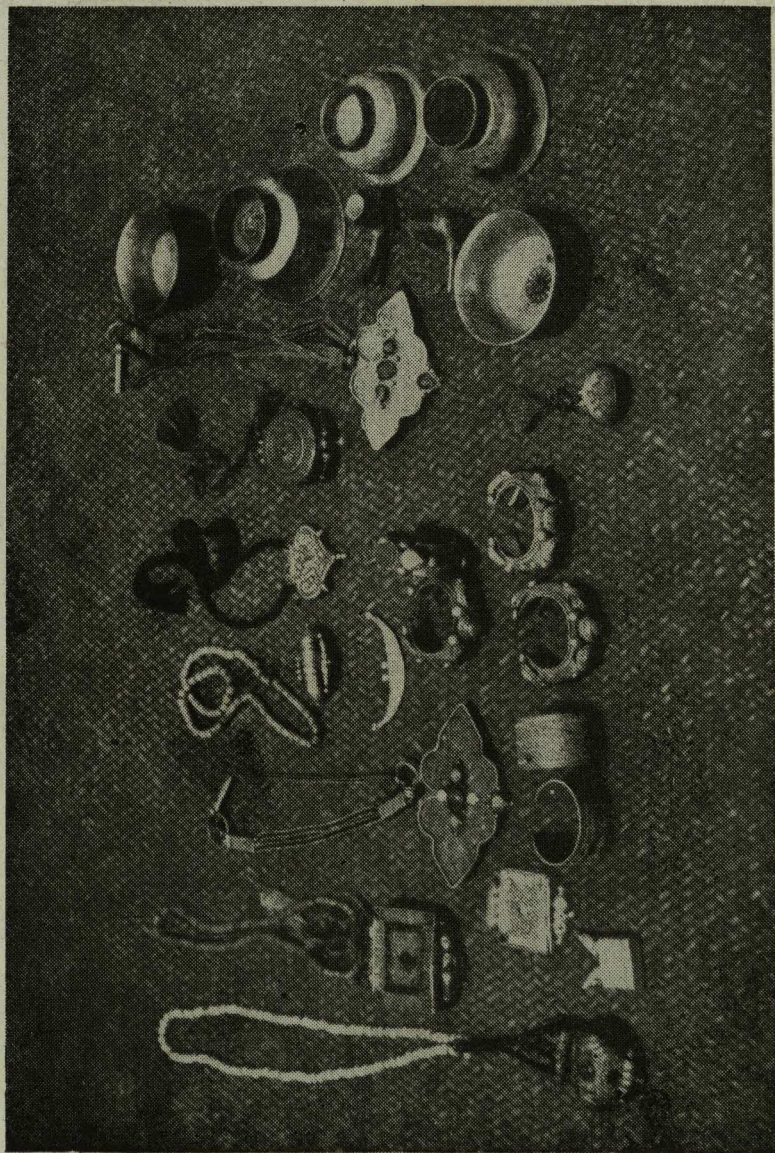


Plate 31. Ornaments and Silver pots made by silversmith.

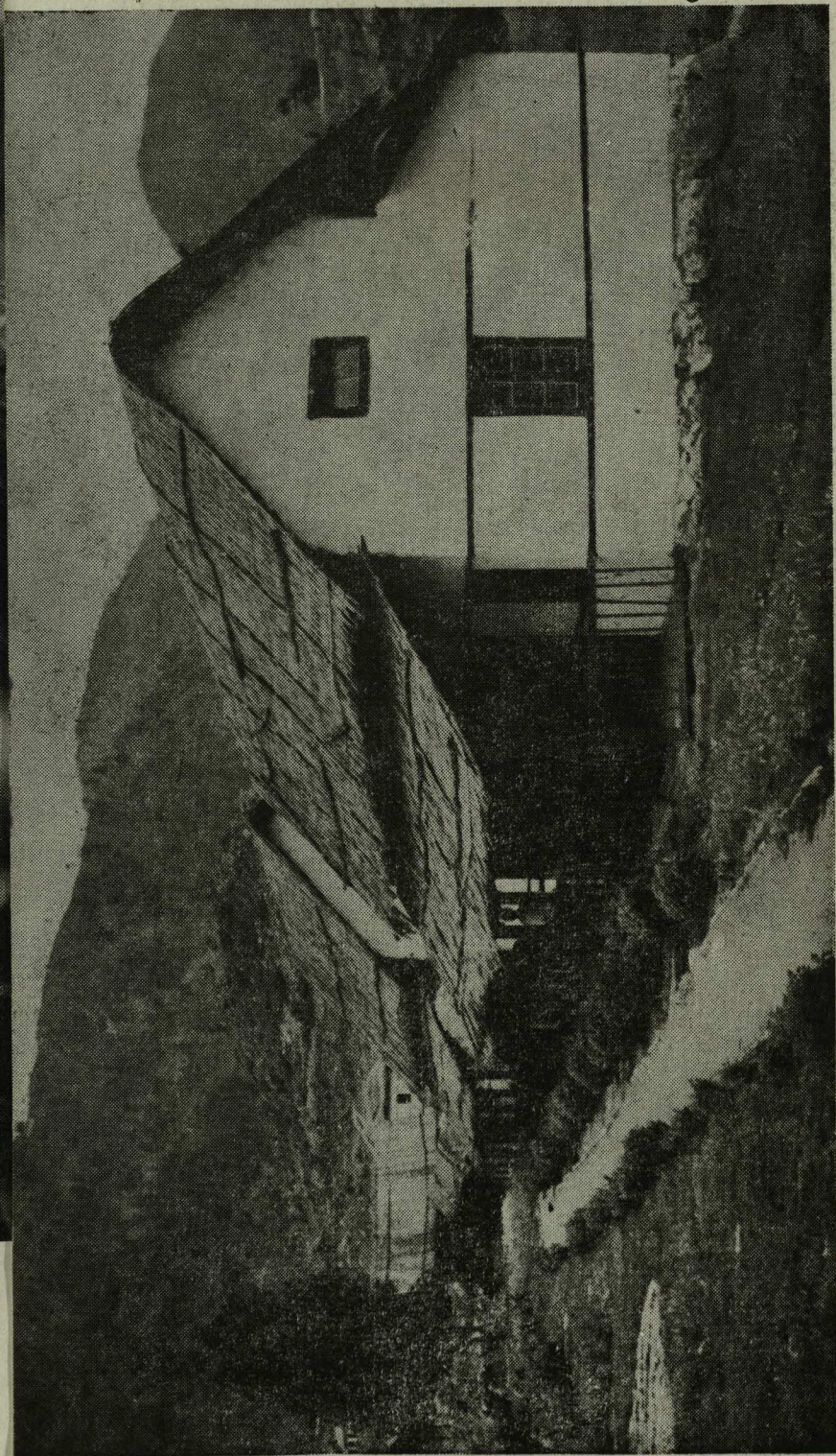


Plate 32. Hospital at Rupa.

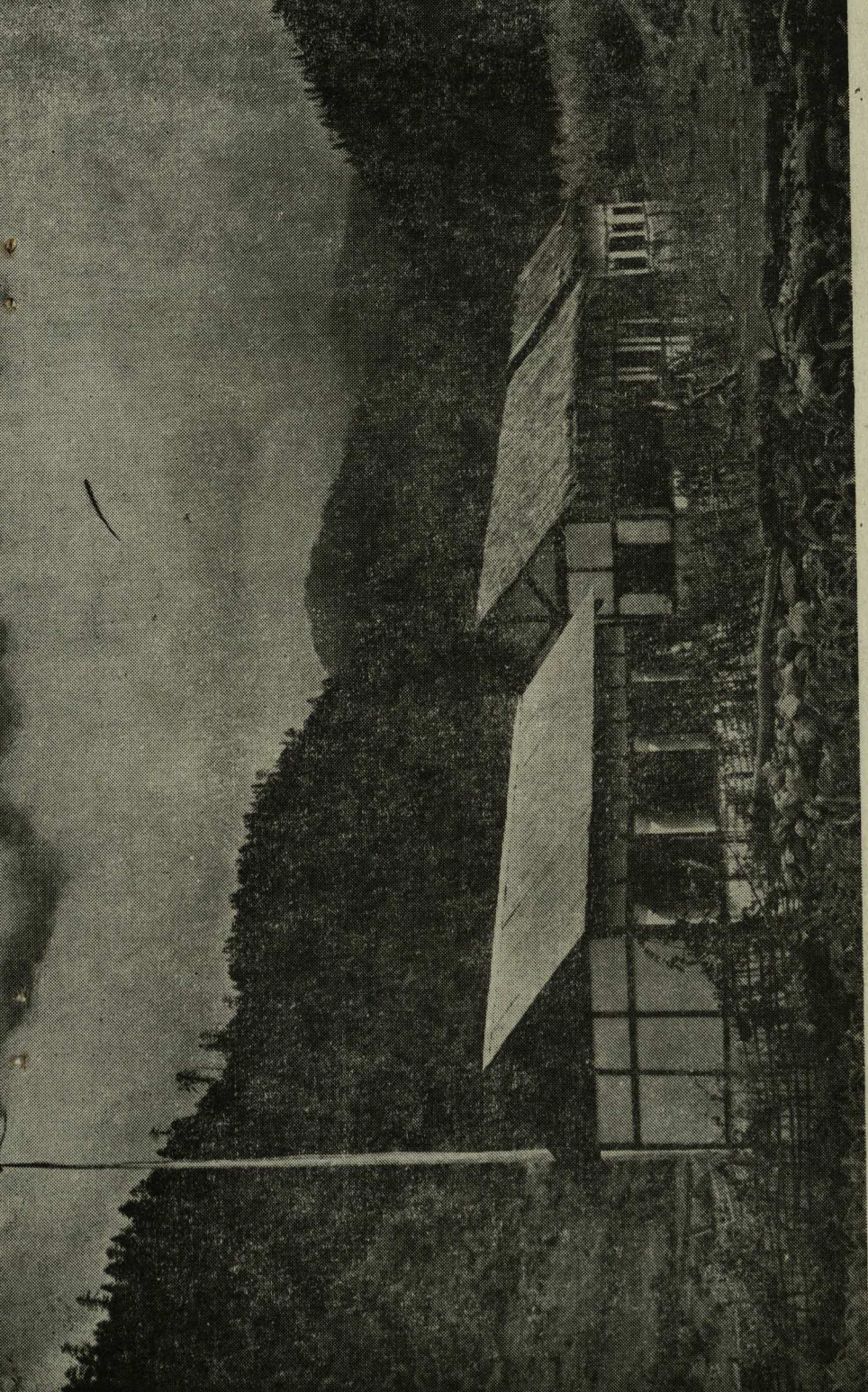


Plate 33. Village L. P. School.



Plate 34. Ceiling of school Kakaling.

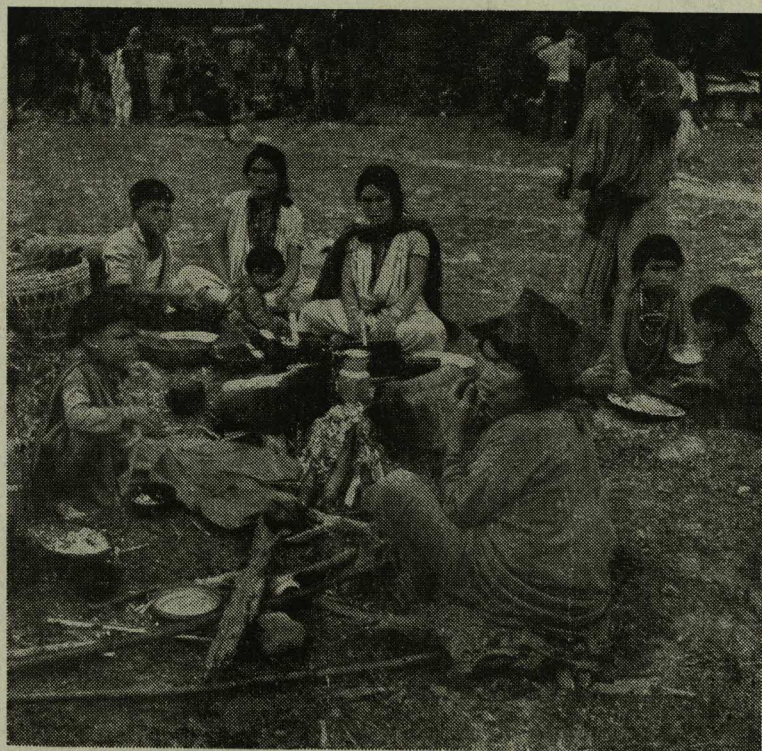


Plate 35. Sherdukpens alongwith their families on their way to Rupa Gaon from Doimara.

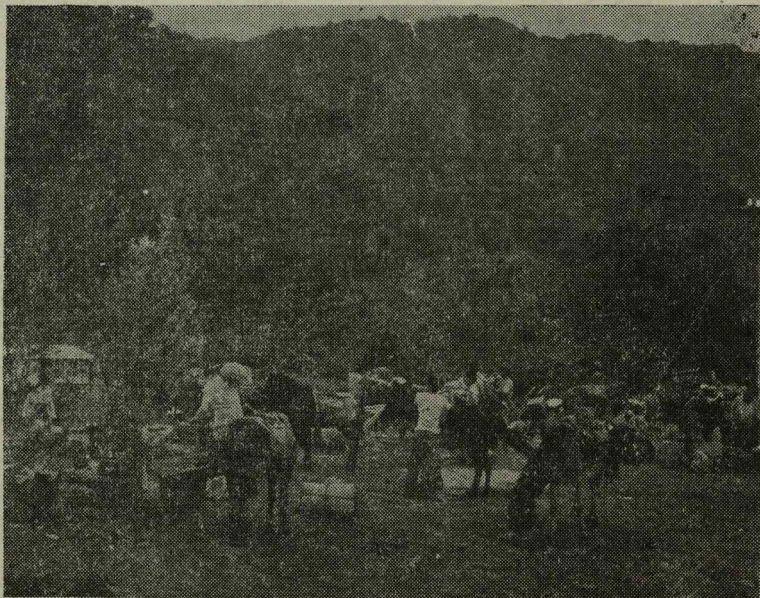


Plate 36. Sherdukpens after little rest, ready for march on their way to Rupa Doimara.

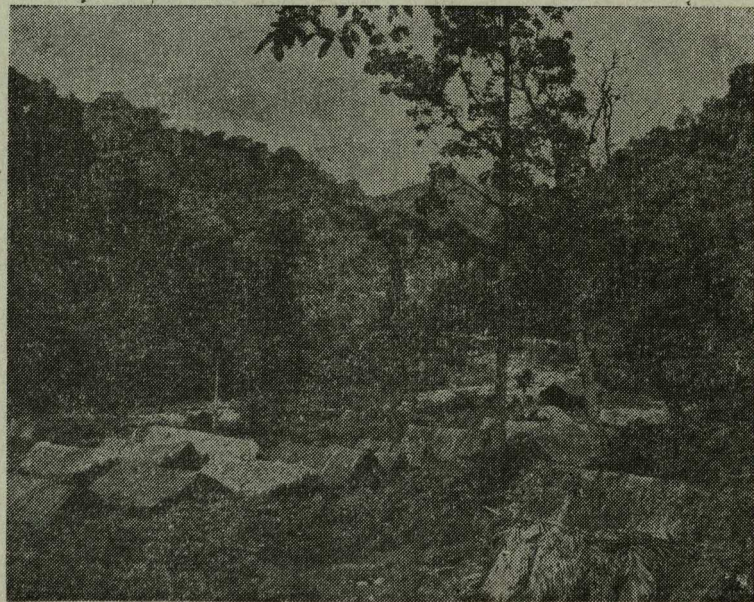


Plate 37. A view of winter camp of Sherdukpens at Doimara.

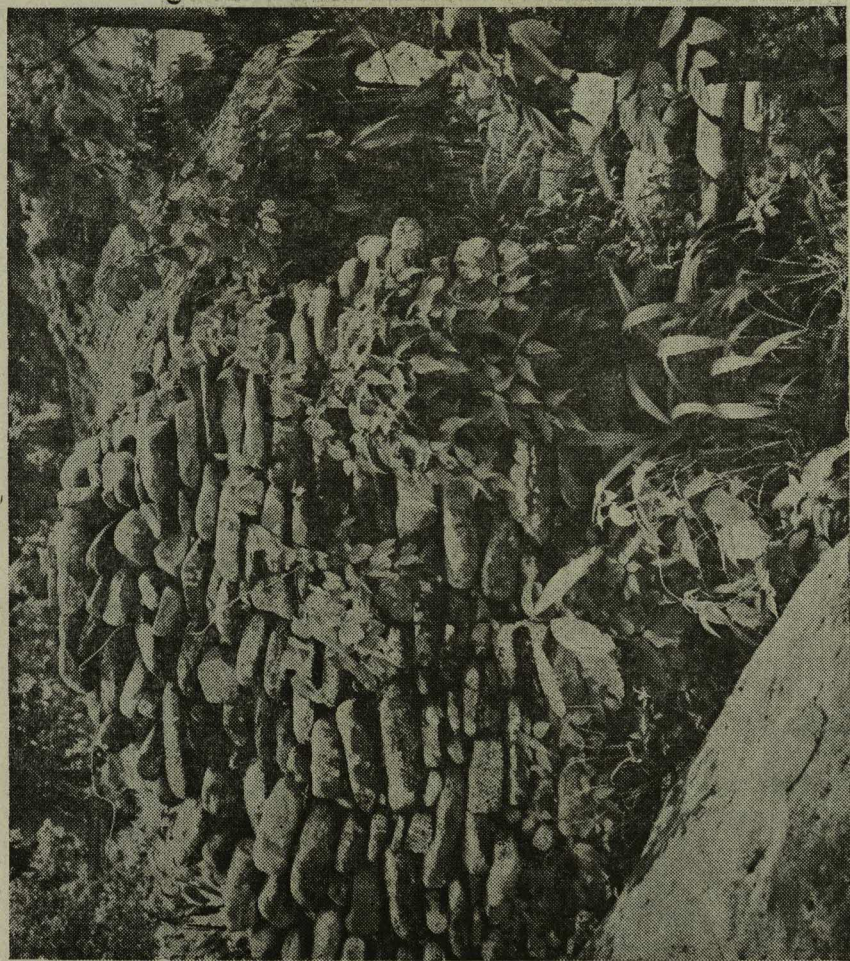


Plate 38. Shrine at Doimara.

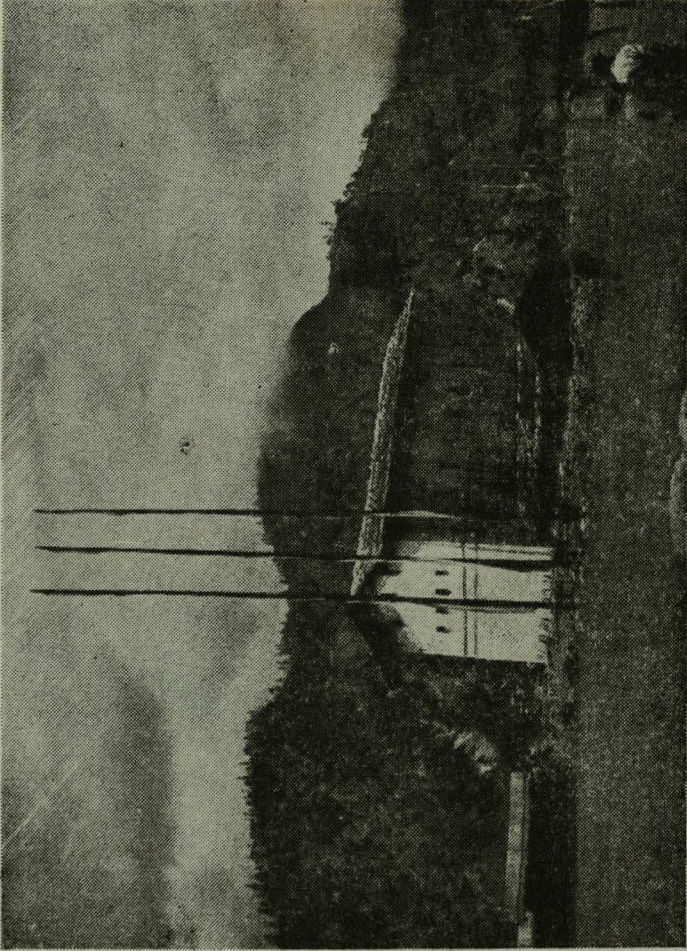


Plate 39. Village Gompa. On the left side there is one apartment for cooking food during festivities.

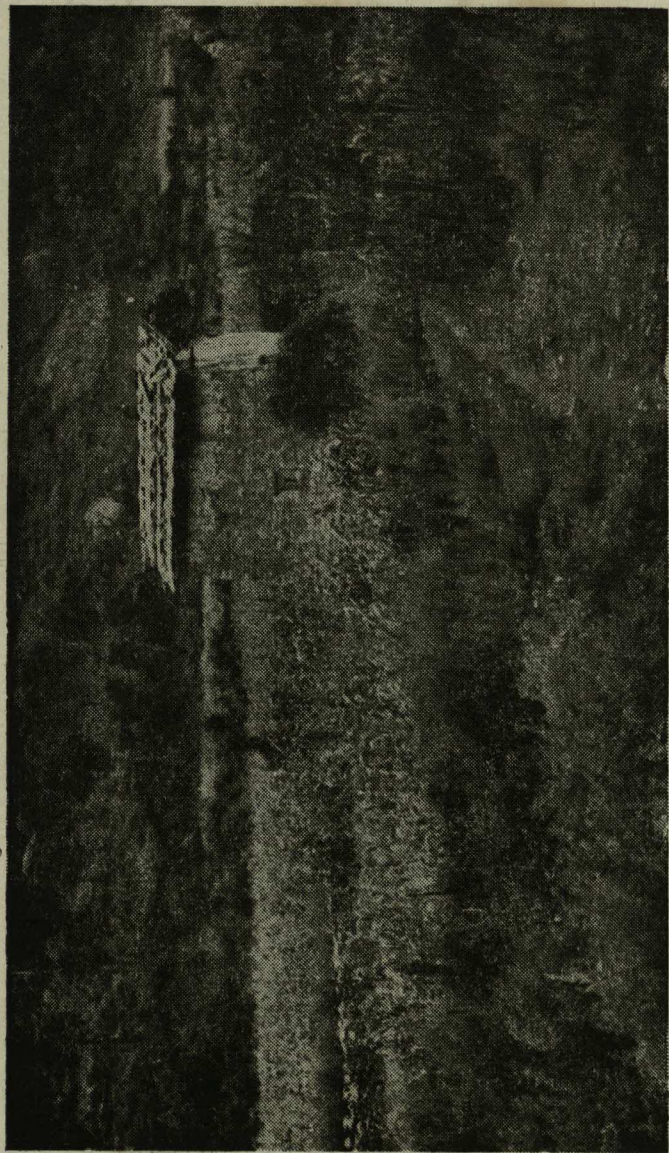


Plate 40. *Dungzur* (a religious shrine). Inside it is housed a prayer wheel which is run by water.

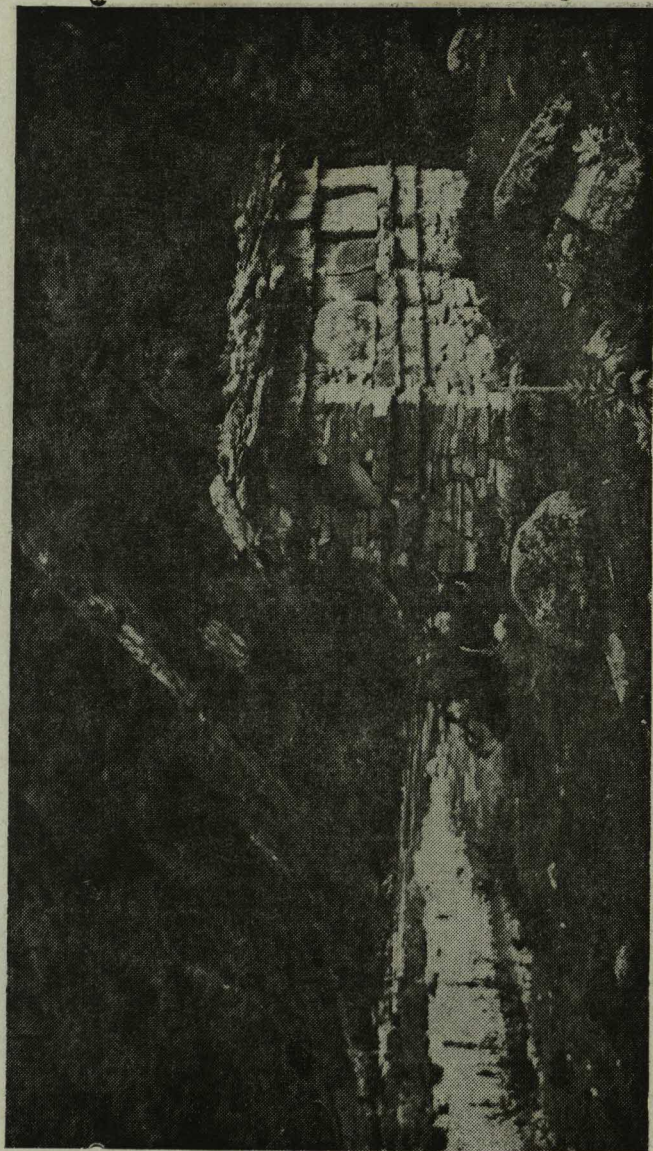


Plate 41. *Village Mane*

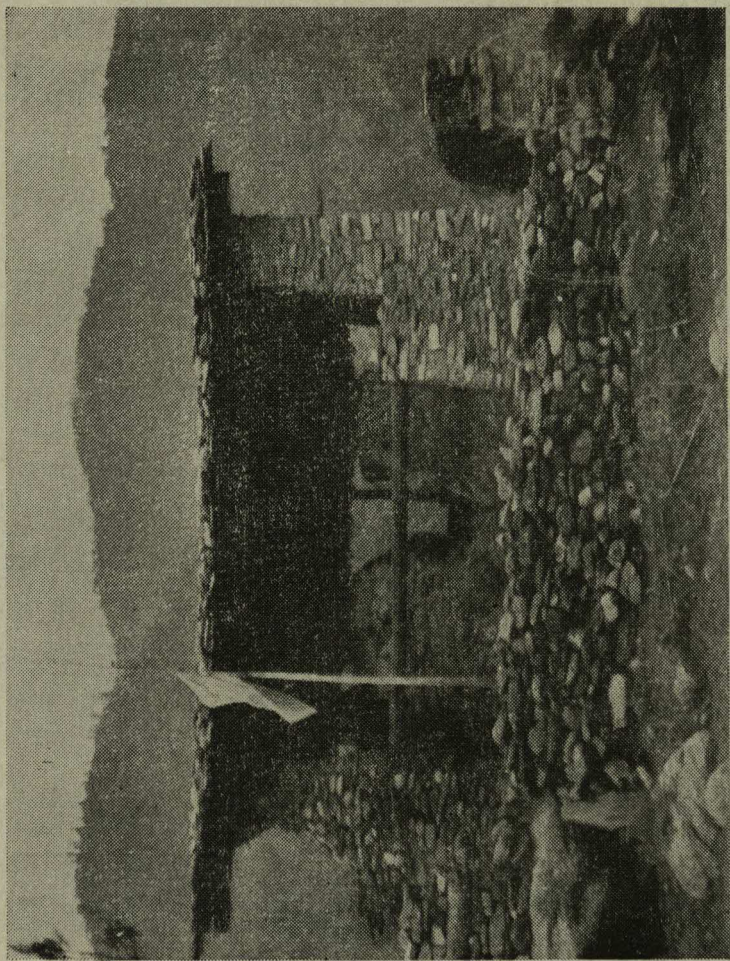


Plate 42. *Chhorten*: These two *Chhorten*, are religious shrine and are erected in order to get rid of various might spirit and sufferings of the villager.



Plate 43. Stone tablet inscribed with prayers being kept on the village *Marie*.

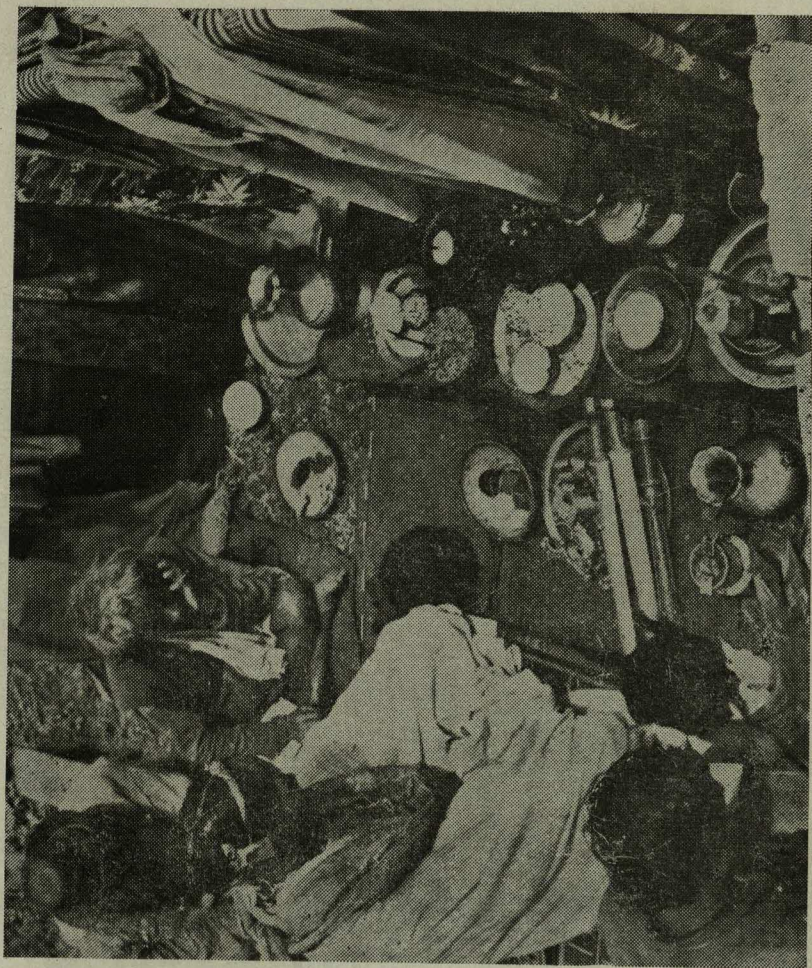


Plate 44. Worship of local deities for curing the sick persons.

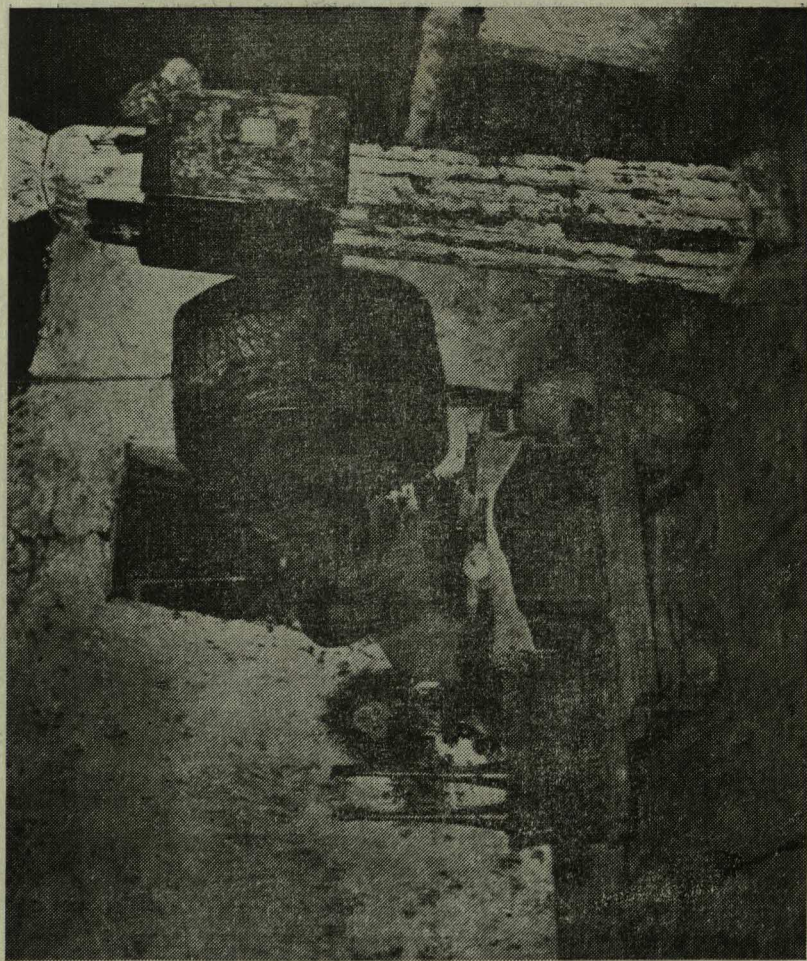


Plate 45. A lama performing puja.

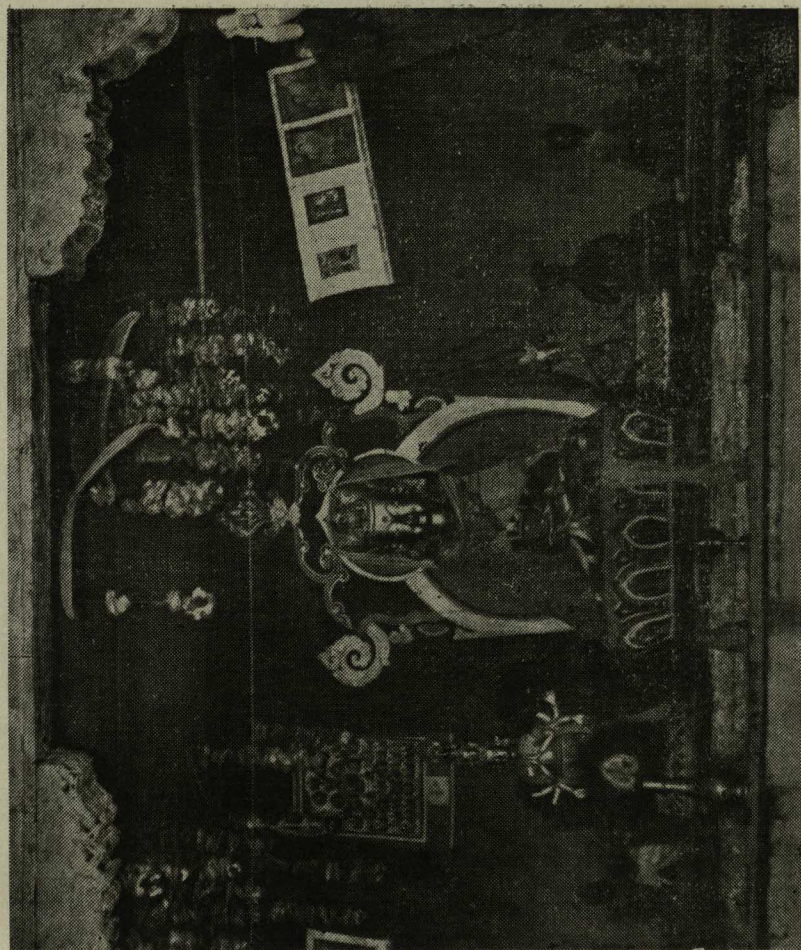


Plate 46. Image of Lord Buddha inside Gompa.

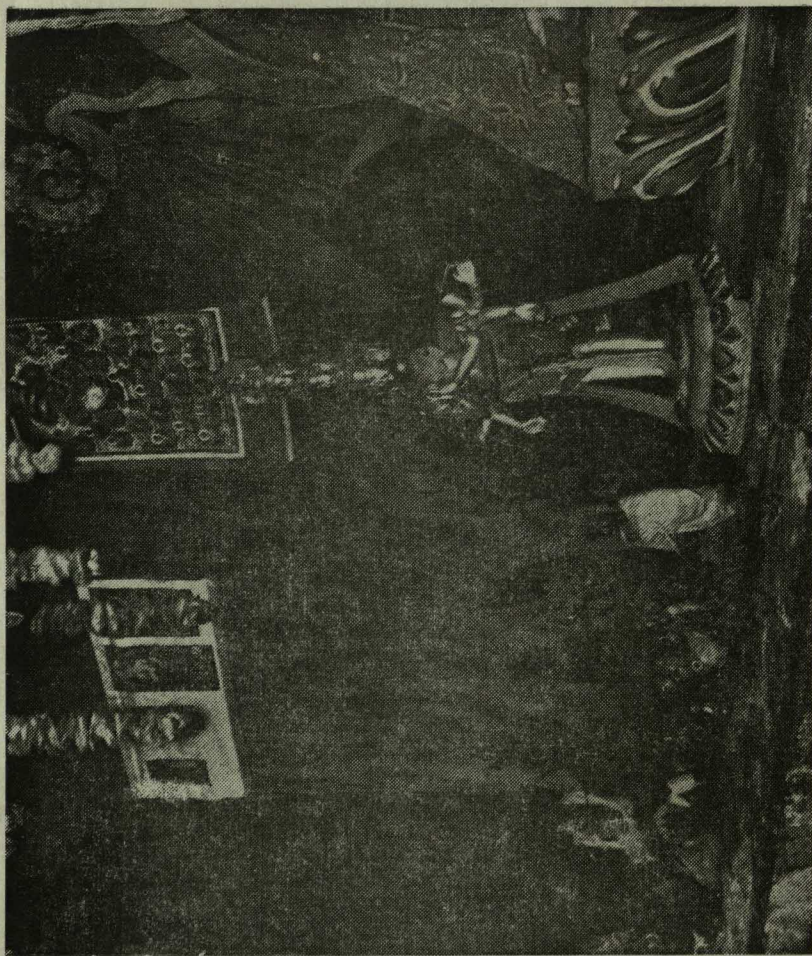


Plate 47. Details of the arrangement of deities on the right side of Buddha inside the Gopana (From Left to Right-Drema, Dorji, Tanjing, Tuptothangthong, Tombe and Chhma Dorji).

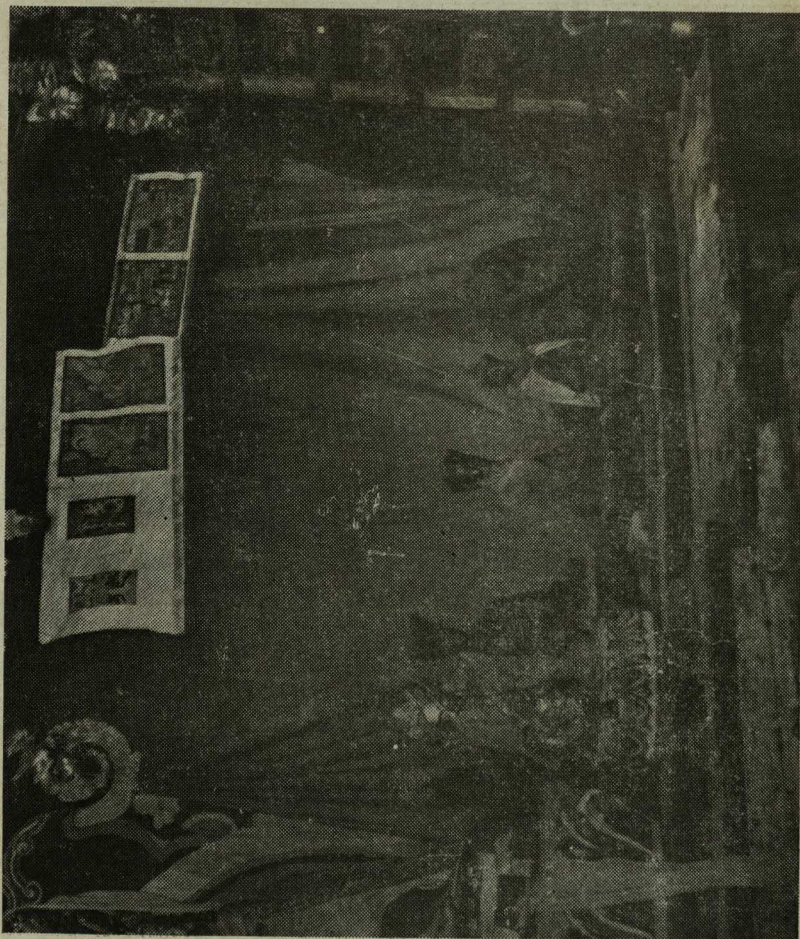
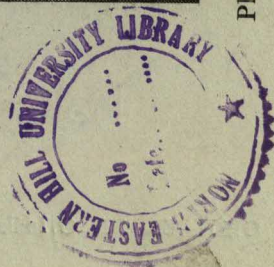


Plate 48. Details of the images on the left of Lord Buddha inside the Gumpa, (Name from right to left-Rinchin Narbu, Chareji, Chhombepang, Trena, Dorsing Chareji and Chhma Dorji.



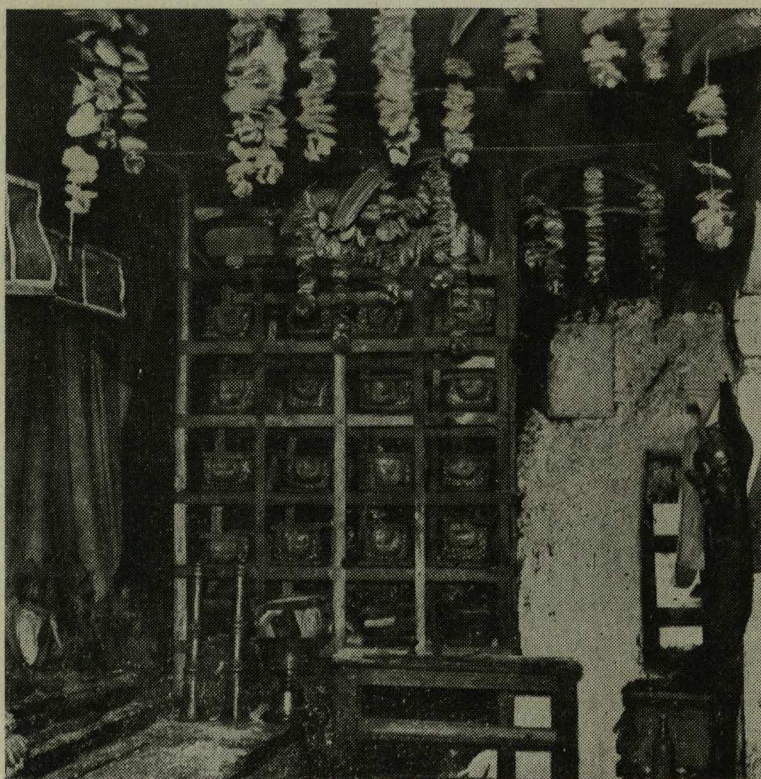


Plate 49. Library inside the Gompa having religious books.



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